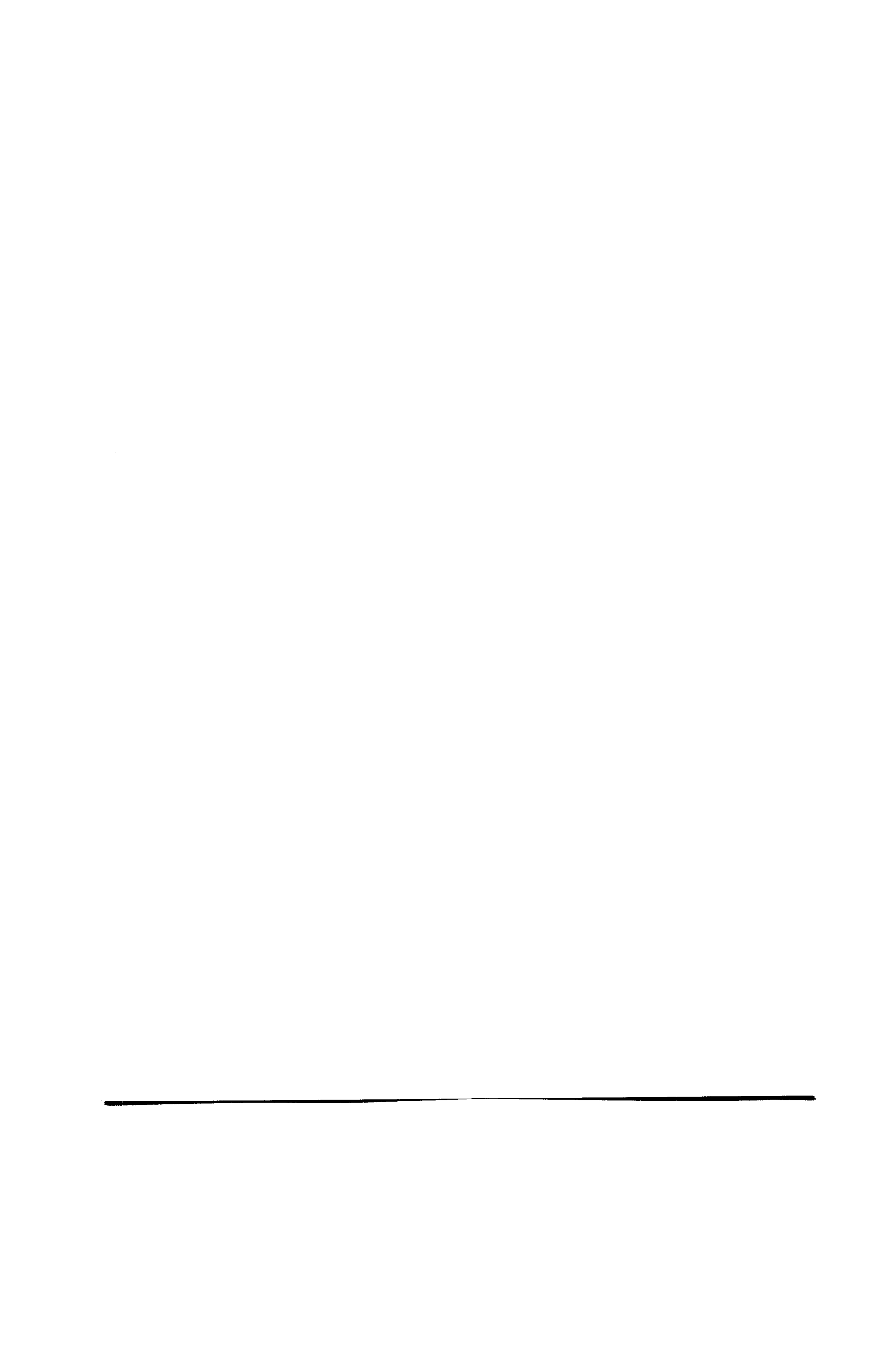


THE DRUZE

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SAMIH NATUR
AKRAM HASSON

Asia Publications

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Art editing and design: **Yael Shitrit**
Cover design: **Yael Shitrit**

Printed in Israel 2001
By **Asia Publications**
Daliat El Carmel

We would like to express our deepest appreciation to the people that helped us to present this book to the wide public. First of all we would like to thank Dr. Brian White from the University of Lincolnshire & Humberside for reading the draft of the book and for making most valuable remarks. As well, we would like to thank Prof. John West-Burnham from University of Hull and Prof. Vasile Vese -the Chairman of History Department in "BABES- BOLYAI" University of Cluj for their significant assistance and encouragement to publish this book.

Also, we would like to thank the ex-China Ambassador in Israel, Wan Changyi and his wife for their special relation to the Druze community.

Samih Natur, Akram Hasson

List of Contens

In January 1996, I was asked by my University, at very short notice, to go to Israel to teach some students who might be interested in following one of our degree programmes. It was the first time I had traveled to the Middle East, and I immediately felt at Ben Gurion Airport that I was in an interesting and exciting land. I still remember the long taxi drive from Ben Gurion up to Haifa where I was staying. I recall seeing road signs to Tiberias, Galilee; names I learnt at school when we had religious studies lessons.
My teaching took place in a small community center in the edge of Daliat El Carmel. Again the taxi driver from Haifa to Daliat was very different. The steep hills through the Mount Carmel region presented to me pictures that were new and different. There was the unusual mix of old and new. In the car the mobile telephone rang continuously; outside the shepherd herded his sheep as he and his forefathers would have done thousands of years before. At Daliat I met, for the first time, the Druze people. Two characteristics were obviously apparent; their eagerness for success and their genuine kindness. My teaching went well; the feedback was good and the students went on to be successful with their programme. Following from their success a large number of students enrolled and obtained degrees. This was my first time in Israel, but not my last. Because of the success of the visit I was asked to look after the Israel programmes and for the next four years I made over 50 visits to Israel and Daliat and spent total of 8 months of my life in this Middle East country.

Akarm and Smih's book on the Druze which I have read through and made changes as requested is an interesting account of a wonderful people; their history is fascinating. The parts of the book I like to best are those that deal with their everyday life, and it recalls to my mind the experience I have had whilst in Daliat El Carmel, Julis and other Druze villages. In all my visits I have been treated with respect, kindness and always felt safe and secure.

The hospitality of the Druze is boundless, and when you visit their homes, which I have done on many occasions, nothing is too much trouble. They treat you as a beloved member of their family. Memories of that first visit are still with me today. They include seeing Akram's Mother-in-Law makde the traditional Druze bread, picking Kumquats from a bush and eating for the first time the delicious Persimmon fruit. During my visits Akram and I became very good friends and I was privileged to be invited to a number of Druze ceremonies, such as weddings. They were exciting and interesting times.

My work for the University in Israel is now finished, but I would like to put on record how I valued my time at Daliat and that I hope to visit Israel again in the not too distant future.

Dr. Brian White
ULH International
November 2000

The Druze people are in many respects unique. While they share all the strengths of Arab culture their religion and culture marks them out from almost every other national and cultural grouping. Their uniqueness stems from a number of almost paradoxical features. They have preserved an intense sense of identity yet are fully part of the nations in which they live. They are a deeply religious people yet their faith and morality are not obtrusive or divisive. They are firmly rooted in their communities yet are outward looking and welcoming. The Druze are very much a product of their history yet are adaptable, responsive and creative in their response to modern society.

Perhaps the greatest strength of the Druze people is an overarching moral basis to their communities. The predominant characteristics of the Druze are loyalty and honesty – on the simplest personal basis to the most complex national relationships. This creates a profound sense of community rooted in the family. Druze society operates consistently in every aspect of its relationships. Any Druze community reflects the same care for children, passion for education, commitment to work and respect, almost veneration, for age.

The Druze may be one of the very few societies to modernize on their own terms. This is reflected in an acceptance of social change but an emphatic rejection of anything which challenging the integrity of the Druze community.

The Druze commitment to learning is religious, social and pragmatic. Learning is seen as the key to development, improvement and the creation

of shared prosperity. Sometimes the Druze can be intolerant, demanding and impatient but this is in defence of the principles, which they value. For a people which is so few in numbers the Druze have produced a disproportionate number of leaders who combine vision with the politics of the real world; a sense of social justice with the capacity to act and social mission with personal compassion.

To be called a friend of the Druze is an honour and a privilege.

Professor John West-Burham
International Leadership Centre
Institute for Learning
University of Hull

Druze community is as extraordinary community with its own unique religion and belief, culture and tradition, customs and folklore. They are honest and sincere, enthusiastic and forthright, cleat about what to love and what to hate, characterized by a distinctive national individuality. Druze people are versatile and romantic, producing quite a few excellent statesmen, scholars and poets, active in all fields.

Druze and Chinese people have enjoyed traditional friendship and are close to each other emotionally. I have many Druze friends and we always visit each other like relatives. Whenever our Druze brothers have joyous events, it is for sure that I myself or my colleagues will call at their houses and extend our congratulations. Whenever I host the annual happy event of National Day celebration, my Druze friends will no doubt be the distinguished guests. It is in those contacts that we have comprehended the virtue and the gracefulness of the Druze people.

Pending the publication of Mr. Akram Hasson's book, I have written down the above words as a token of my congratulations.

Wan Changyi
Chine Ambassador in Israel

Preface

The Druze belief relates to two types of separate communities, which are different from each other, but are connected by the same religion. The first one is the Druze public, which has been known as such for the last thousand years and which has lived throughout this period in the Middle East. This public is aware of its identity and operates as a defined ethnic collective with obvious historical recognition and destiny. The second public however includes those called by the general designation of believers in an exclusive religion. Those are the groups and nations who accepted, at the beginning of the 11th century, the principles of the Druze faith but lost connection with the centre in Egypt and Lebanon and adopted over the years separate identities nationally and culturally. Since, due to the persecutions, a state was created in which all connection was cut off between the sides, each settlement like this grew independently and developed separately. Over those years the exposed Druze settlement was persecuted and had to protect itself all the time, thus it was not capable of searching, over the course of history, for other publics holding the same beliefs. Only in the last decades did a need arise, among extensive circles in the Druze, to ask questions and wonder and search for the lost believers. Researchers, travellers, intellectuals, leaders and just curious Druze people, discovered here and there traces of the existence of peoples or tribes similar in their beliefs to the familiar Druze beliefs. No formal contact has yet been established with those bodies, and for the time being no practical step has been taken to verify those guesses and conjectures.

The book before us deals with the conventional Druze public, which is known and acknowledged in the Middle East. We would like to note a number of important remarks:

1. The Druze faith is a secret one. It should not be printed, only copied

in handwriting by qualified people. There is no custodian or authoritative body supervising and approving the writing process; for this reason there are no two identical books as each one was written by a different writer, a fact that aroused the apprehension that some duplicators added something of their own to original writings, which does not belong to the original faith. Furthermore, the Druze had religious and political enemies throughout history since the establishment of the faith. These enemies deliberately introduced fabrications and errors into the books in order to blacken the name of the Druze and incite the other peoples against them. The religious Druze books are supposed to be secret. If someone sees a Druze religious book in European university or library or museum, it is not sure that that book is wholly or partly original.

2. The chief promulgator of the Druze faith was Hamza Ben Ali. Before him there was a promulgator called Nashtekin El- Darzi, who abused his status and authorities and after a while deviated completely from the original faith and started to see in his personality a prophet and messenger. In order to attract believers to himself, he promulgated convenient principles and rules for everybody. He gave free rein and did not impose on his supporters any limitations. El-Darzi caused great damage to the Druze belief.
3. The Druze faith is secret not because it includes confidential details, worldwide secrets or miracles but because it is built on the principle that in order to arrive at the truth within the believer must be skilled and absolutely dedicated to the faith and its affairs. A superficial reading of the religious books misses the target and causes misunderstanding. A revelation of the truth within the faith can be reached by a continuous memorization of the books and knowing all the texts by heart. Understanding and interpretation of the inner truth within the texts includes living the religious experience within the group for a long time, experiencing scenes of spiritual elation by total severance from the vanities of this world, and physical spiritual isolation from any outside influence, and the creation of an immediate connection between Man and his Creator whilst renouncing any pleasure or benefit from the tangible world. If the Druze believer does all this then he will be capable of reading the texts of the religion and observing their deep inner meaning.
4. The Druze political and religious leadership never encouraged the Druze scholars to write books about Druze history or society, lest

they will write about faith by mistake. Indeed there were many Druze scholars who wrote books of religious commentaries and various theological books but these books entered the category of religious books and their publication was forbidden and they are still books that only religious Druze are permitted to see. Almost no secular books were written. The Druze used to use all the time a not so wise saying:
" We are make history and others write it". The damage of this saying was revealed in its full severity during the civil war between the Druze and the Maronites in 1983 in Lebanon where the Maronites tried to expel all the Druze from Lebanon with the help of the Israeli army (the Druze were Lebanon's rulers for 800 years.) Then the Druze leaders felt there was a failure in providing information. The result was, that over the last 20 years a greater quantity of books was published than in the last thousand years, but this is still not enough.

The book in front of you opens a wide window onto the Druze congregation and tries to answer many questions, asked in the course of history. It reviews the period of formation of the faith, the first years, the course of history afterwards, the exclusive development of the population in every settlement of the community in various states, the central figures who led the population in all fields, the central beliefs in the faith, the magnificent status of the Druze woman and her high and special rank, the unique subject characterizing the Druze community- reincarnation and in addition new and unknown details.

Chapter One

The origin of faith

The Druze faith was established in Egypt in the beginning of the 11th century, in Cairo during the rule of The Fatimid Caliph El Hakim Beamr Alla (985-1021). The Fatimic Caliphate, which was established in North Africa in 909, was an Islamic kingdom, from a Shiite origin. Until then all Islamic kingdoms were mostly Sunni. The establisher of the Fatimic kingdom was the Caliph Ubaied El Mahdi (died in 934), who was a part of the Ismaeli branch, of the Shiites. The Fatimic Caliphate (the name was given in the honour of Fatima – the wife of the Caliph Ali Ben Abi Taleb, and the daughter of the prophet Muhammad) was based in all North Africa countries, in the rule of the fourth Fatimic Caliph El-Muez Ledin Alla (ruled between 953 and 975). It succeeded in basing and reinforcing its rule in Egypt. This Caliph, with the assistance of his army commander Jawhar from Sicily, built the city Cairo and made it the capital of the whole kingdom. In 970 Jawhar built the El Azhar mosque, which later became a university and a spreading centre of the Fatimic theories . The fifth Fatimic Caliph was El Aziz Bella (ruled between 975 and 996). He succeeded in conquering Palestine, Syria and the Jordan bank and extended his rule to these places. The sixth Caliph was El Hakim Beamr Alla. He became a ruler in 996, when he was only 11 years old. Until then the rule has had a Muslim character, according to the Shiite interpretation based on the Koran and the tradition of the prophet Muhammad and the Caliph Ali Ben Abi Taleb, the prophet's cousin .

El Hakim is known and famous in Arab and Muslim history as a disputed character. Some historians have praised him for being honest, a true believer, and for his belief in justice and equality. Others saw him with bad manners, due to the harsh rules he enforced on the population. He tried to introduce new norms together with new reforms in the public life, first in tender ways. But when this failed he used violence and was very firm and

severe. The courts of the Caliphs in Baghdad, Damascus, Halab, and other places – were filled with debauchery and corruption. Women were perceived as a shared merchandise, money was spent on luxuries, and those who maintained close relations with the rule enjoyed many privileges, compared with the rest of the civilians, who suffered from shortages, persecution and scheming. In this situation, it was obvious that El Hakim was aware of resistance to the prevailing situation. He had forbidden all feminine activity in the court and had stopped the manufacturing and selling of alcohol. He ordered to leave all stores open and severely punished thieves, prevented women from meeting men and prohibited freedom to walk in the streets, prevented common bathing for men and women in public washing places, prohibited the killing of beef, since the cows were needed for farming, ordered to kill all dogs, except for hunt dogs, as well as pigs, and decreed that some kinds of foods were damaging.

In contrast, El Hakim initiated big, comprehensive reforms and innovations, which improved, to a large extent, the living conditions of the population: he built hospitals, mosques, decreased prices, made it safer for the trade convoys on the roads, compensated the people who suffered damage as a result of drought and floods. He was the first Muslim ruler to demand the complete and total release of slaves, and gave autonomy to them. He fostered science, art and studies, built the biggest library of the time, not only in the Islamic world, but in the whole world, called Dar El Hikma (the temple of wisdom). It was a comprehensive cultural institution including a huge library, a museum, university, research institute and a hostel for scientists and ideologists.

El Hakim tried to show by self-example to the court people; he was modest and ascetic and felt contempt toward money and property. He lived a simple life, rejected any coquetry and exaggeration in court life and called for modesty and simplicity. This was totally opposite to many other rulers both before him, and after him, in Egypt and in other places.

The treatment of historians toward El Hakim was influenced by the rise of the new faith, which developed in his days, under his encouragement and inspiration. The religious and historical elites do not connect El Hakim directly to the spreading of faith, and there is no evidence of any activity by him, in this direction. The founding of the new faith was done by a group of assistants and helpers, headed by five distributors, led by the biggest Druze faith distributor – Hamza Ben Ali. He was a Persian intellectual born in Persia in 985 and studied in the university of the Persian capital, Zauzan. When he was 20 he came to Cairo and was welcomed in the court of El

Hakim. He became one of his allies. The formal act of declaring the faith was on January 30th, 1017, when El Hakim issued a manifest in which he proclaimed on the unity faith and appointed Hamza Ben Ali as the first Imam (a role similar to that of the high priest).

Before the faith was proclaimed there were a few preparation acts, which reflected the coming of the new faith. El Hakim's close assistants performed these acts. It began when El Hakim published a manifest by hanging it in the streets of Cairo. This manifest was later called "the hanging manifest", which was a first call for a new period, a new style and a big event. El Hakim appointed Hamza Ben Ali to be the Imam – the most senior religious man – and Hamza begun to spread the principles of the new faith in Egypt and in the whole world.

Amongst the first religion disciples there was a man called Nashtakin El Darzi, a Persian immigrant. He arrived at El Hakim's court in 1016 and asked to serve him. He was recruited to the mission of spreading faith. However, his motives were not entirely pure, and after a while it was discovered that Darzi was spreading lies and unmoral principles about the faith, in order to attract the masses to glorify his personality and himself and to shift the prophecy tiding to him. Therefore he was proclaimed persona – non- grata and was forbidden to speak in the name of the new faith.

Meanwhile, his call attracted a relatively high number of believers, who felt attracted to the belief he spread. These believers were called by their neighbours Druze, after Darzi, and this name has stuck in all believers of the Druze faith, both the real believers and El-Darzi's supporters.

Immediately, a death verdict to Darzi was issued, and a fight developed between the believers of truth and believers of lies, in which Darzi was killed. Later, when the true believers were persecuted by the Sunni majority in Egypt, the concept "Druze" became a name for disgrace and it has stuck to the community until today.

The faith distributors proclaimed a one- year intermission in spreading and distributing faith, in order to clean the area from the remains of Darzi's lie, and they began to work quickly and diligently to spread the real faith. The response and assent were high; many inhabitants in Cairo, Egypt, in the Arab peninsula, Palestine and Syria accepted the faith. El Hakim ordered the release of all slaves, and ordered them to be known as free people.

Hamza Ben Ali was in charge of the distribution, and he did it wisely and efficiently. However, the movement encountered difficulties in the image of false prophets and Sunni objectors, or people with impure intentions.

In 1021 the movement was facing a crucial and difficult test: the disappearance of El Hakim. According to tradition, El Hakim had a habit of going to the El Mukatam Mountain, near Cairo, to be alone.
He left on the night of February 13^{th} 1021 to the mountain, but never came back.

The disappearance of El Hakim was a test to the believers.
The distribution of faith continued as before and was managed by one of the greatest leaders – Bahaa El Din. He came to Cairo from the village Samuka, near Halab, and immediately began spreading faith.
El Hakim, in his disappearance, has commanded Hamza ben Ali to transfer the leadership to Bahaa El Din. He acted in a loyal and diligent manner to confirm belief among those who already accepted it, to try to bring back the belief in the hearts of those who followed the false prophets, such as El Darzi, and to distribute the belief among other believers. One of the first difficulties he faced after the disappearance of El Hakim was the objection of his heir, the new Fatimic Caliph, to the new faith. The new Caliph, El Daher, had persecuted the believers everywhere and forced them to renounce. He did it by using force and by threatening murder. Many left faith, others escaped and others maintained their belief while pretending to have abandoned it.

The arena of distributing the faith went from Cairo to Syria.
In Halab, in Syria, and in Wadi El Tim lived Arab tribes, whose origin was the Arab peninsula, and they were sent by the Arab rulers in Baghdad and Damascus to populate the Lebanon mountains and to protect the border of the Islamic kingdom from the Byzantine Empire. These tribes successfully filled their mission, and when they received the call to accept the new faith, they willingly did so. Other tribes in Antiochia, Damascus, Ramla and Halab also accepted faith enthusiastically. However, there were also opponents and strong enemies among other tribes. There were bloody wars between the two camps.

In 1036 the Fatimic Caliph, El Daher, who has persecuted the Druze, died, and was replaced by the Caliph El Mustanzer. Bahaa El Din maintained good relationship with the new Caliph and by this removed the burden of persecution from the believers. They were finally free, after many years of persecution. The believers who never broke up maintained their belief carefully and convinced others to join.
Meanwhile, the believers in Syria experienced a severe crisis in 1032, when Muslim and Byzantine forces gathered to persecute the believers in Antiochia, in north Syria. The Druze in Antiochia suffered almost a total

genocide. Every believer not willing to change his mind was killed, and so the Druze settlement in Antiochia, which in the past was a most important cultural and political centre, was destroyed.

After the disappearance of El Hakim the clarification effort passed from Egypt to Syria, especially to Halab, South Lebanon and North Palestine. In Egypt the struggle was directed against the dissidents.
There was no possibility of the joining of new people, since the whole atmosphere had changed. This struggle, handled by Bahaa El Din, against the dissidents, was almost lost, and he had to trust and rely on the Druze believers in the North, where the roots were stronger and where there was a strong and stable foundation for the new belief among the Arab tribes in the area. In the North, too, there were many and dangerous rebels and dissidents. However, the strong and unified movement of believers was able to overcome them and able reinforce religion in wide areas. When Bahaa El Din saw how things were in Egypt, he proclaimed, in 1043, on closing the gate to the entry of new believers to the Druze faith, and ever since there is no option available for non-Druze to join this faith. You are a Druze by birth. The call for the new faith was heard in all places around the world, including India, China, the Arab peninsula, eastern Asia, Europe and even America. The call, which lasted from 1017 to 1043, was long enough to allow children to grow and decide for themselves about their faith and destiny. A free choice was given to all to decide whether they wish to join the Druze faith. Those who agreed joined the faith and maintained their belief and are today still the members of this community, through the incarnation. The Druze feel today that the new faith, which was widely spread in the beginning of the 11^{th} century, all around the world, was accepted in many places, however, we know nothing about it, and that the Druze settlement continued to exist in those places in its own conditions, in the local society and in the local language, and connection was created later between the various groups and countries. In the last century, the Druze who wandered around the world have often encountered closed and small groups similar in some manner to the Druze community – a common culture, common way of life or symbols. There are evidences to the existence of Druze in India, China, Persia, Morocco, Yugoslavia and other places, but there is no international institution to judge whether they are Druze or not.

When Bahaa El Din decided to lock the gates of faith, he also commanded to conceal the Druze belief from others, foreigners.
The faith became secret, both as a result of the persecutions and stress, and because there was no longer a missionary interest in spreading the faith.

Moreover, not every Druze is entitled to know all the contents of the faith, and those who wish to do so have to go through certain procedures and commit their lives to a different behaviour.

For a long time there were no Druze in Cairo. They either immigrated or hide or changed their mind, and therefore the continuance of the Druze belief has largely grown in the north, in Syria, Lebanon and Palestine.

Chapter Two

History of the Druze in Lebanon

Lebanon was recognized only in 1920 as a defined geographical unit. Before it was divided, despite the fact that it was small, to smaller areas, and every area was ruled as in the past by feudal families, who arrived to Lebanon in the Eighth century, from various places, as the Arab peninsula, Iraq and Syria. These families have developed from the Arab tribes that wandered with the Islamic conquerors who came from Mecca and Medina, and settled in the new areas conquered by the Islamic army in the Seventh century, with the expansion of Islam. Lebanon was a border area between the Islamic Empire and the Byzantine Empire.

The population was sparse and the attacks by the Byzantine became frequent. During the rule of the Omayas (660-750), whose capital was Damascus, and which was closed to these areas, the rulers were able to repulse the attacks of the Byzantine and their followers. However, when the Abbas Empire was established, in 750, it proclaimed that its capital was the far away Baghdad, and it was impossible for it to protect this border from there. The second Abbas Caliph, Abu Jaafer El Mansur, instructed a few Arab tribes that lived in Iraq and Syria to go west and to occupy the Lebanon area. These tribes have followed the command, settled in all areas of Lebanon, blocked the entrances to the Byzantine and followed the mission they were supposed to do. Almost all of those tribes assented and responded to the call of Bahaa El Din, to join the Druze religion. While the Druze settlement in Egypt got weaker, the settlement in Lebanon flourished. In that period the Abbas in Baghdad became weaker, as well as the Fatimics in Egypt and the Omayas in Spain, and there was no strong Muslim rule. The Islamic world was split to weak Emirs and kingdoms. Therefore, no pressure was exercised on the Druze, and they were able to survive and to base themselves. The strongest family that led the rest was the Tanuch

family. It handled and managed the affairs of Lebanon for 400 years, until the Ottoman occupation, in 1516.

The Rule of the Tanuch Dynasty

The Tanuch tribe was a Christian tribe, originated in the Arab peninsula. This tribe had migrated to Iraq and established the "Hira" kingdom, before Islam. They became Muslim along with all inhabitants of the area, when Iraq was conquered by the Islamic forces, and moved to Syria. They were asked, in 758, to populate Lebanon. They agreed and settled near Beirut, Sidon and the Lebanese mountains. When they settled, the Byzantine Empire and the old Maronites, who were loyal to them, attacked them. However, they were defeated by the Tanuchs, who also succeeded in basing their rule in other areas in Lebanon.

The Tanuch house included more than one tribe. Their success in Lebanon led to other sections of the same tribe settling in additional areas in Lebanon. This is how they came to Southern Lebanon, the Shouf Mountains and Northern Palestine.

When the emissaries of the Druze religion came to Lebanon, the Tanuchs welcomed them. They enthusiastically joined the mission of starting the new religion. Their salient leader was the Emir Abu El Fawares Muadad (died in 1040), who became a mythical figure in Druze history. The Druze settlement reached the peak of its strength when religion was established. Its borders were: Antiochia in the north, Halab in the east and the Galilee in the south. This success was only temporary, and within a few years the believers suffered a Byzantine attack in Antiochia, and the discovery of rebels against the religion in Hasbaia. There were fights and massacres and the Druze settlement was reduced, but still succeeded in hanging on and maintaining itself as an independent rule.

The Druze shut themselves off for 50 years in their settlements, isolated themselves and tried not to be too prominent. The religious affairs became a routine. There were, occasional, clashes and fights with some of the traditional neighbours, who did not accept the new religion. However, the will to suppress the new religion and to defeat them has reduced over time.

In the end of the Eleventh century there was a very important event, which caused the unification of the whole area – both Druze and non-Druze.

This was the arrival of the First Crusade in 1099. This was an unpredicted danger, and no factor was ready to defend and defeat it. The Fatimic kingdom crumbled, the Abbas kingdom was very weak, and the Seljukes Emirs who ruled in Damascus were not ready for such an attack. The Druze found themselves in the very heart of the battle, since they were the first to be met by the crusaders, on their way to Palestine. Therefore, the Druze had no option, but to fight the crusaders. They sometimes succeeded and sometimes failed. However they did their best to postpone their arrival in Jerusalem. The Druze had experienced a very bitter defeat, in 1110, when the crusaders conquered Beirut, Sidon and the whole area, and slaughtered all before them.

However, they continued to settle once the crusader kingdom established.

Another set of fights occurred in 1051, and the Druze had a big victory over their enemies. This, along with their prolonged struggle, glorified the Druze in the eyes of the rulers of Damascus and other rulers in the area, who did nothing to protect the Islamic world while the Druze, have sacrificed thousands of their community members. Only then did the Muslims consider them as equal citizens and stopped persecuting them on a religious ground. In this period they were given the good and positive denomination "Bany Maaruf" – the sons of benevolence, and this has replaced the former denomination "Druze", which was regarded as a disgraced denomination.

The tight collaboration between the Druze and their neighbours happened during the rule of Salah El-Din El-Ayubi, the king who defeated the crusaders in the battle in Karnei Hitin, in 1187. It released Jerusalem from their rule and returned it to the Islam. The Druze took an active part in the battle. Salah El-Din, was grateful, based the rule of the Tanuchs in Lebanon and accepted them and their status. Religious persecution stopped, and the Druze maintained a way of life that was similar to Islam.

According to tradition, Salah El Din built the grave of Jethro in Kefar Hitin, after his victory, as gratitude for his Druze partners.

This building still exists. The big victory of Salah El din led to the release of Beirut, Cidon and other cities of the Druze.

The crusader from Europe was unable to accept the defeat, and the third crusade was immediately organized. Meanwhile, Salah El Din died, and a bitter quarrel between his sons, regarding rule, and it began weakened them, their total resistance.

The crusaders re-conquered many important places and the Druze were unable to face them on their own. The quarrel in the Islamic world deepened

and extended, and the quarreling factions were the Ayubs – the sons of Salah El Din and the Mamluks, who won in Egypt and started to bite territories in the north.

Another chance for the Druze to prove their loyalty to the Islamic world occurred when the area was attacked by the Mongolian intruder, Hulako. The decisive fight between the Mongolians and the Muslims, who were led by the Mamluk ruler, Kutuz, took place in the area of Ein Jalut (Maayan Harod), in 1260. The Druze fought alongside the Islamic forces and were responsible in part for a brilliant victory. As a result, the Mamluks, as well, have accepted and acknowledged the rule of the Druze in Lebanon. The Druze stood side-by-side with the Mamluks in almost all of their wars against foreign intruders. They also participated in a naval Mamluk journey against the neighbouring island, Cyprus, in 1425, and assisted in conquering it.

Their good connections with the Mamluks, which were based on mutual respect, were characterized by lack of religious persecution. It has been over 300 years since the establishment of Druze religion, and it became an existing fact. The Druze found the time to rehabilitate themselves and to support and assent their spiritual existence, after they were occupied, for 300 years, with protecting themselves and basing their status. New cities and villages were built, new fortresses were constructed, agriculture was nurtured and the irrigation were improved, trading ways were paved and workshops were constructed.

They also tried to maintain security in the roads. Only in this period did the Druze leaders find time to discuss religious issues and re-establish them. In the Fifteenth century in Lebanon lived the biggest and most famous theologian, El Amir El Saied Jamal El-Din AL Tanuchi (1417-1479). He has organized the religion books, and interpreted them.

While religion was established against struggling and persecuting, which was for over 300 years, foreign beliefs and inadequate foundations have remained. There was no authoritative figure to discuss and decide on affairs. El Amir El Saied, along with his scholar pupils, decided what was most important and what was unnecessary in religion, and cancelled over 47 beliefs that were not originally part of the religion. Foreign utilitarians, interested persons, whose intention was to make the Druze religion look bad and to make others against it, had added these in the past. These factors, along with the appearance of El Darazi as a preacher for false beliefs, continue, to this very day, to interfere with the Druze, since there are still people who stick to a certain detail in the history books, which has nothing

to do with the real Druze religion. El Emir El Saied has resolved these affairs and determined the ftrue fundamentals of religion. He has also regulated all the rules of prayer, marriage, divorce and requiem ceremonies.

The acts of the Emir El Saied have infiltrated all Druze and showed them a clearer way, religiously speaking, and this has also reflected on political and military aspects.

The collaboration of the Druze rulers from the Tanuch house with the Mameluke rule remained a very tight collaboration, but this ended in 1516, when the Ottomans conquered the area. This led to the end of the rule of the Mamelukes in Syria, Israel and Lebanon. The Druze remained strong. They had only replaced leadership. From now on they would be under the rule of the Maan family rulers, for 200 years.

The Rule of the Maa'n Dynasty

The Maa'n house was a big Druze tribe, when the Druze religion was established. It was near Halab and willingly accepted the call for joining the Druze religion, together with some other near-by tribes.

The Maa'n house maintained by marriage, connections with the Tanuch house, which, in that period, was located near-by, in the Maa'rrat El Nua'man area. The Tanuchs, who ruled in Lebanon long before, accepted and welcomed any assistance offered to them from their brothers, the Maa'ns. The marriage connections, trade and collaboration among them became tight, especially after the crusaders have arrived. The Maa'ns assisted in all fights of the Tanuchs against the crusaders, and after a while they left Halab and settled in the Shuff Mountains, inside the Tanuch kingdom, in order to strengthen and reinforce the Druze settlement. They also participated and collaborated in all the struggles and fights of the Tanuch members against the Mongolians and other invaders. At the same time enjoyed a peaceful period throughout the Fifteenth century, which was shared and enjoyed by the whole settlement.

The Maa'n family accumulated assets on time, and became one of the wealthiest families in Lebanon. The population was composed of big tribes or families. Each family ruled a certain area. The head of the family was appointed by the Emir (the ruling prince) to collect taxes from his area and to supply warriors to the Emir, when necessary. The Emir was than transferring some of the taxes to the central rule, which, in the period of the

Tanuchs was the Mameluke rule in Egypt. The Maa'n family reached a degree of wealth and military strength that was similar to those of the Tanuch family, yet the hegemony was in the hands of the Tanuch family, since it was supported by the Mamluk rule. In 1516 the Ottomans under the leadership of the Sultan Salim the first attacked the area. The Tanuchs fought with the Mamluks against the Ottomans and the Emir Fakher El Din, from the Maa'n house, supported the invading power, under the leadership of the sultan. In the most important battle between the Mamluks and the Ottomans the latter won. The Sultan gave Fakher El Din, as a symbol his gratitude, the title "the governor of the Lebanon area", including all authorities, and cancelled the rule of the Tanuch house, which lasted for 500 years.

Emir Fakher El Din the first (1507-1544) ruled in the area, he collected the amount of taxes required and gave it to the central rule in Constantinople. In time, he took care in securing the roads, especially the roads to Mecca, built two cities in the Shouf mountains – Baa'klin and Dir El Cammer- and encouraged trade and agriculture. Enemies, whom, more than once, instigated the rule of Damascus against Fakher El Din and pushed him toward attacking the residence of the Maa'n house region and slaughtering the inhabitants, surrounded the area.

After Fakher El Din the first died, his son Karkamash ruled (1544-1584). He first enjoyed a period of quiet, stability and economic growth. He maintained good close relationships with the other Druze families and with the Sultan. However, his non-Druze neighbours attempted all the time to incite the governor of Damascus and the Sultan and his representatives against the Druze, using the old claim, that the Druze deny Islam. In 1584 the convoy that transferred the taxes from the various districts to Constantinople was robbed.

This happened in Akkar, which was not under Druze rule. However the Ottoman governor blamed the Druze for the robbery, out of vengefulness and political considerations. The Sultan ordered Ibrahim Basha, the governor of Egypt, to attack the Emirate of the Maa'n house and to punish it for the robbery. The Egyptian governor prepared a big military force and siege the Maa'n house Emirate, from land and sea. Those under siege had no option but to fight.

The Druze lasted under the siege very well, for a while. The Egyptians had to use tricks and devices to hunt the Druze and to kill many of their leaders. The Emir of the Druze, Karkamash, was killed, leaving two small children. The rule was not taken from the Maa'n family. It remained, as a deposit, in

the hands of Karkamash's wife, princess Nasab, and her brother, members of the Tanuch house. They maintained the Emir issues in a loyal and efficient way, until the eldest son of Karkamash, Fakher El Din, grew and was entitled to receive the rule. Nasab (1546-1633) was born in A'bai and grew in an atmosphere of leadership, wealth and luxury. She married the emir Karkamash and assisted him in managing the Emirate, using her wisdom and knowledge.
She was known in her title "the tremendous lady" and historians called her "Sultana". When her husband was murdered her children were little, she asked her brother to take care of them, and in her wisdom she was able to repulse, diplomatically, all attempts of governors and jealous rulers around to take over her rule district, in the absence of an adult emir.

The great Fakher El Din

The second-in-importance ruler after El Hakim was Fakher El Din. He was born in Baaklin in 1572, while his father was the governor of Lebanon. He was a minor when his father was murdered, in 1584, and when he turned eighteen – his uncle, who was his guardian, gave him leadership and ruling.

The young emir began immediately uniting his kingdom. He married a woman from the Arslan family, maintained good connections with the Shihab and Tanuch houses in the south, as well as others, through gifts and alliances. He signed a military pact with Ali Junbalat, the emir of Halab, and together they faced unfriendly rulers.

Fakher El Din stabilized security within his ruling area, maintained trading connections with the Duke of Toscana, and others.
Italian ships arrived to the ports under his rule and replaced merchandises with the inhabitants. Economy flourished, there was full employment and the emirate was in its peak. This irritated the surrounding enemies, who joined together against him. The Ottoman Empire declared war on Fakher El Din. It organized a massive military force, which included over 50 thousand soldiers, who marched toward the Shouf Mountains and threatened the authorities. Fakher El Din felt, in his sharp senses that he is unable to overcome and win. He therefore gathered his people and announced that he would be exiled to Europe and gave the rule to his son, Ali, in order to prevent the murder of innocent citizens.

Fakher El Din sailed, in 1613, with a small group of people loyal to him, to Italy, where he was willingly accepted. He was given the right to stay there, until the atmosphere at home was better. He re-established his connections with various princes in Italy, as well as connections with the kings of Spain and France, and the Pope in the Vatican. The Spanish king offered him to convert to Christianity, and in return to appoint him to a king in a certain region in Spain, twice bigger than the region under his rule in Lebanon. Fakher El Din refused.

Meanwhile, his mother lady Nassab operated in Lebanon to ease and relax the atmosphere and to placate the ruler of Damascus.
She agreed to be a hostage, as long as they would stop their behaviour toward the Emirate and its inhabitants. In 1615 there were changes in the leadership in Constantinople and Damascus, and people who were more pro Druze were appointed. They released lady Nassab and allowed the Emir, Fakher El Din, to return to his country.

When he returned, he found much ravage and destruction. However, that emirate continues to exist. He reorganized his districts, made new alliances, looked after the Sultan's officials and revenged the rulers who joined together against him, while he was gone. The relationship of the Ottoman Empire toward him has changed positively.
The Sultan gave him, in 1618, many districts, and appointed him the ruler of Arabstan, from Halab in the north to El Arish in the south. Fakher El Din reached the peak of his power in these years. He made many things that were not popular and accepted in the Ottoman Empire and in the whole area, regarding their innovation and development. The surrounding Ottoman rulers jealously looked on his achievements, and marked his aspirations for independence and for maintaining connections with the west. It was felt, in a certain moment, in Constantinople, that Fakher El Din might get too strong, and cause troubles, therefore it was decided to fight end his rule. The Sultan Murad the fourth ordered the governor of Damascus to construct a strong coalition and to fight Fakher El Din. There were periods of tension and preparations of both sides. The sons of Fakher El Din attacked an Ottoman force and killed many of its soldiers, and unfortunately two of them were killed and two were captured. Fakher El Din reached the conclusion that there was no chance of winning, and therefore surrendered, and was sent to Constantinople and was put on trial. He made a very impressive speech before the Sultan, in which he protected himself, but this did not help him, and he was sentenced to death. The execution was performed in 1635.

Fakher El Din had a number of achievements:

1. **Stability and economic security**: He was more than an Ottoman ruler, or a feudal king who concentrated on collecting taxes. He considered himself a modern ruler and wished to construct a new kind of state, no less than the European countries. He has exposed his country to Western influence and feared no exposure, since he prepared his people to give up the old for the firm foundations of the traditional social structure, and at the same time to experience the New World and unpopular ideas. He took advantage of his relations with Europe and brought experts in agriculture, trade and industry, in order to improve these activities. He constructed fortresses, built bridges over rivers and opened inns for merchants on the roads.
   He introduced new species to agriculture, which succeeded well, and exported them to Europe. He improved the silk industry, as well as the soap and oil industries, which became an important export to foreign countries. The ports of Lebanon worked at a rapid rate, many ships arrived and brought new merchandises. There was full employment and the roads were safe.

2. **Social equality**: One needs to remember that we are dealing with the Ottoman Empire, which suppressed every attempt for progress, development, equality and education, in all its regions, and caused the Arab population, under its ruling area, to go back hundreds of years.
   In the same time, Europe experienced the end of the Middle Ages, and the beginning of the Renaissance. The European philosophers began to speak about democracy, equality and understanding among citizens.
   Faher El Din did not speak of these issues, but rather fulfilled them.
   Rather than acting like a feudal king, he introduced equality to all citizens.
   He assigned no importance to the religious origin and each and every subject was able to reach any status in the government, no matter what his religion was. He was the first governor in the Middle East who gave equality to Christians and Jews with the Muslims. They could pray, as they desired, construct praying houses, carry weapons for self-protection and live without limitations. He tried to raise national emotions and nationality when this concept was still in its very beginning in the west.

3. **Fostering education and culture**: the whole Ottoman Empire sank in an ocean of ignorance and backwardness. The whole subject of education, literature and arts was neglected, and even strongly oppressed, in order to prevent the people the chance to advance and an attempt to be released from the burden of the Ottoman Empire. Only in the district of Fakher El Din things looked different. He supported the writers, artists, philosophers and intellectuals, assisted in constructing the first printing house in the east, he established schools and gave his protection to all enterprises whose aim was to expand knowledge. His problem was that he ruled for only few years, and in those years he had to fight constantly, and did not have enough time to complete his plans and enterprises, which were strengthened and enlarged as a result of his staying in Europe.
4. **Strengthening the status of the Druze**: Fakher El din never wavered and emphasized his Druze origin and he tried as hard as he could to conceal this truth, and not to allow for any option of giving priority to people of his own origin over the other religions. This is a very practical and wise policy, since the Druze, in the last few centuries, asked only for equality and peace. They were always persecuted by their neighbours on religious, economical and feudal grounds, and they only wished to be left alone, without any reference in their past, and with freedom to live and pray as desired. Therefore, they did not look for privileges, even when they ruled, on the contrary: they wished to prove to the hostile environment that they are noble and have good character, and that the fact that somebody rules does not mean that he has the right to oppress others.

The very fact that the large Druze families had the rule was a big achievement for them. In this period the religious and spiritual lives flourished. In the days of Fakher El Din lived another of the greatest theologians ever – El Sheikh El Fadel, the novel Sheikh, who set up many new religious rules and clarified many issues and subjects that were not clear. He continues to be a reference for all religious disputes. The appearance of the Sheikh led to internal solidarity and revival, and to a serious rise in morale among the Druze.

Politically, too, the Druze were able to raise their heads. For the first time, the mountain of Lebanon was called "the Mountain of Druze", and this became a popular and accepted fact among inhabitants of the area.

In the period of the house of Maan an ancient historical ideological debate rose among the Druze, called the dispute of Case and Yemen. The

foundations of this dispute are in the origins of the Arab tribes, which lived in the Arab peninsula, when some of them came from the south, that is: from Yemen, and some came from the north, from Case. This dispute has accompanied the Arab tribes since they left the Arab peninsula, in the Seventh century.
Most of them joined the Druze religion, but never forgot the dispute between them. This dispute was about hegemony and rule, and it was sometimes bloody.

After the death of Fakher El Din, which marked the period in which the Druze reached their highest strength, there was, naturally, a decline, and as a result- the awakening of forces that were dormant and inactive before. The Maan house was a branch of the Case section, while the Emirs from the Tanuch house, who ruled before and ceased ruling, were part of the Yemen section.

In the decade after the death of Fakher El Din the Druze experienced many hard internal fights and struggles, based on this ideological foundation. In the head of the leadership of the Yemen section were sheikhs from the Tanuch Alam El Din house. These reached power and ruled for a few years, but most of the time the rule was in the hands of non-salient Emirs, from the Maan house. This struggle exhausted the Maan house because of the interference of Ottoman and other rulers, who did not like the fact that the Druze have reached the high status they had under the rule of Fakher El Din, and they looked for every possible way to change this.

After Fakher El Din ruled the son of his brother Yunes, the Emir Malehem (1635-1657) and after him his son, Ahmed, who died in 1697, with no male heirs.

The internal dispute was so severe, that the rulers from the Caseian section preferred to appoint an Emir from the Shihab house as a governor. They preferred Sunni Muslims to a Druze Emir from the section of Yemen. The Emir Ahmed had a daughter who had a son, Haider. He was the only male offspring of the Maan house, and it was decided to appoint him as an heir to the Emir, but since he was a minor, the Emir Bashir Shihabi was appointed as his guardian. So, the Druze lost, due to a severe internal dispute, the dominant rule in Lebanon, and as a result they faced many troubles in the following years.

The rule of the Shihab Dynasty

The Shihab was a lucky family. As other families, they came to Lebanon gradually. They appeared in the middle of the 12th century in South Lebanon and settled in Hasbaia and Rashaia areas. They immediately arrived to the stronghold of the Druze population in Wadi El Tim, which has just received enthusiastically the new religion. It seems that they also received and accepted religion, or pretended to have accepted it, and with time, they acquired status and hold in Wadi El Tim area, and appeared as the rulers there. The various changes assisted them in receiving the status of Emirs in South Lebanon, and when the Maan family ruled, and since Fakher El Din has adopted a policy of openness, tolerance and dis-strictness regarding religion and origin, and since the Shihabs appeared as Druze, marriage and good relations flourished among the two families, and they assisted each other to solve problems.

When the last male offspring of the Maan house, Emir Ahmad, died in 1697, the Druze leaders decided, out of keeping and following the genealogy and heritage rules of the Ottoman rule, which were exact and accurate, to choose the Emir Haider El Shihabi, the cousin of Emir Ahmad. In the same time, two very central sections in the population- the Case and Yemen people – disputed, and despite the need to choose a distinguished Druze family for leading the population, the leaders preferred to choose the offspring of a neutral family, as long as it had some connections with the previous dynasty. This was the biggest mistake for the Druze, because ever since they began to loose their rule in Lebanon, which lasted for near 700 years. The polemic between Case and Yemen was discovered in its severity in this period, and it will cause the Druze to loose their rule and to exhaust and slaughter each other.

Choosing Haider El Shihabi showed that the leaders of the Cases section among Druze preferred a Caseian rather than Yemen Druze leader. The Yemen section organized and tried to fulfill and materialize its rights and power. Emir Haider has appointed Sheikh Mahmud Abu Harmush, the head of a big and strong Druze family, as a leader of a region in Sidon area. In the same time – the Ottoman rulers appointed Sheikh Yousef Arslan, and Sheikh Yousef Alam El Din, both Yemen, as governors in the southern area. There were, now, three Yemen leaders who ruled, and began to threat the rule of the Shihab, and tried to return hegemony and rule to the Druze. Emir Heider El Shihabi turned to defence, escaped from the city Dir El Camar and hid in a cave in the North for a year. He secretly organized his forces,

and waited for a failure or slip in his adversary. Mahmud Abu Harmush tried to scheme at and to harm a few families from the Caseian camp, who turned to Emir Haider and asked him to fight, and assured him their support. He summoned his supporters from the Caseian branch. Many leaders, with their forces, responded, and in the same time Mahmud Abu Harmush began to organize the Yemen forces for the crucial meeting between the two sections. Abu Harmush camped in a village of his supporters – Ein Dara. The Shihab camp secretly organized, split into three sections and in a complete surprise attacked the enemy in Ein Dara (1711). A bloody and severe fight developed. However the element of surprise was crucial – the Yemen leaders were either killed or captured. Abu Harmush was imprisoned, but was not executed, due to the existence of the Ottoman law prohibiting executing a man with a status of a government. They settled for cutting his tongue and two of his fingers.

The Ein Dara fight is, until today, remembered as a notorious fight among Druze, and as the climax of an internal war between two branches, for no apparent reason. Since that point – the Druze's status as the rulers of Lebanon has deteriorated and declined. The Caseian leaders who supported the war against the Shihabs received lands and ruling areas in Lebanon. The leaders of the Yemenis, who were defeated, as well as their family members, emigrate from Lebanon to Horan, where they began to settle in the Druze mountain, and from there some of them turned to Israel, in which there was a Druze settlement ever since the establishment of religion.

One of the Caseian Sheikhs who supported the Shihabs and received a big county after the fight of Ein Dara was the Sheikh Kablan El-Kadi, who won the Gezin area. This Sheikh received the honoured degree "the Sheikh of all Sheikhs", due to his high religious and political status.

He died in 1712, and had no male heirs, but only a daughter, who was married to the Sheikh Ali Junbalat. The Junbalat family ruled Halab area for a long time. It was one of the first families to receive and accept the Druze religion. During the Maan house rule, they received the title "Emir Umara", that is: the Emir of all Emirs. They had good collaboration between them and Fakher El Din. In 1607 the Damascus governor acted against the Junbalat family and deposed them from the rule in Halab area. Many of them turned to the Shuff Mountains and were received and welcomed with love and warmth by the rulers and inhabitants alike. The Emir Ali Junbalat bought lands and based himself in the Shuff Mountains.

Now, after receiving the rule in his county, under the agreement of the heads of families and with the improvement and consent of the Shihabic Emir, he

led a policy similar to that of Fakher El Din, that is to say: equality, integrity, assistance, security, fostering and supporting economy, etc. He encouraged the emigration of Christians to the area, as professionals who would serve the Druze feudal lords; he gave much land to the Maronites, in order to build churches upon them. He was extremely popular.

After dismissing the Yemen branch that abandoned Lebanon, a new split arouse among Druze leaders, as if it were a curse that one cannot escape. The new division this time was created between the supporters of Junbalat, under the leadership of Ali Junbalat, and the supporters of the Yazbeks, under the leadership of Abdul Salam El Emad.

The El Emad family was a noble, privileged family, which lived in the El Jabel El Ala area, near Halab, accepted the Druze religion and with time, moved to the Shuff Mountains. The family supported the Shihabs in the Ein Dara fight and received an influence area in El Shuff. The two leaders of two camps, Ali Junbalat and Abed El Salam Emad, were strong, impressive and with great capability. In one the meetings between them a verbal collision occurred, which developed into a deep and severe dispute, under the encouragement of the governor from the Shihab house, who felt comfortable to see in his ruling district string leaders fighting and exhausting each other.

The Junbalat-Yazbek split, just like the previous split, between Yemenis and Caseians, penetrated to all layers of people and split it to two parts. It lasts until today.

During the 18th century important changes appeared in the composition of the population in Lebanon. Many Druze from the Casian section left to the Druze Mountain in Syria and settled there. Maronites were asked to come to the Shouf area and to work as professionals. Catholics who enjoyed the religious tolerance invaded in huge numbers the area and settled there, whilst using the Druze's hospitality. Western behaviour began to be apparent in the area. Many missionaries acted in Lebanon and began to establish schools, hospitals, charity institutions and monasteries.

Under the rule of the Shihab house appeared, in Lebanon and in North Israel, a few strong governors, such as Daher El Omar and Ahmad Basha El Jazer, who terrorized and horrified the population. However, the most dominant ruler who ruled in this area during this period was a member of the Shihab house, who appeared as a Druze prince. He was actually anti Druze in his nature, and ended by his own hands the Druze hegemony in the Lebanon Mountain, which lasted for over 700 years. This Emir is Bashir Shihab, "the Mighty". The choosing of Bashir as the governor of Lebanon

was supported and forwarded by the Junbalat family and other Druze families. Big feudal Druze families fought amongst themselves on the question of ruling and priority. These families could not accept the choice of governor from the adversary family, but were willing to accept and give consent to the choice of a person like Bashir Shihab, out of hope that within a few years the circumstances would change and they would achieve their target. Bashir Shihab had other plans. He was elected in 1789, when he was 21 years old, and he ruled for many years, until he was dismissed in 1840.

Since the days of Mighty Fakher El Din the Central and Southern Lebanon strip was called "the Druze land". Emir Bashir received the reign as a ruler of the Druze and he was perceived as such even by Napoleon Bonaparte, who sieged Acre and asked for his assistance against El Jazar, the governor of Acre, and the area that stood still against French forces. Napoleon promised to give the Druze nation independence and autonomy, to ease the burden of taxes, to return the Beirut port and to develop its trading activities. He asked Emir Bashir to meet him, in order to coordinate their mutual acts. Emir Bashir hesitated whether to accept Napoleon's requests. He still enjoyed a very wide Druze support. His Druze consultants, were not eager at all to maintain any relations with France, and doubted the honesty and integrity of Napoleon's intentions, suggested that he postponed Napoleon's request, but on the other hand, they did not join his opponents and preferred to stay neutral.

The Druze did not support Napoleon since he was a foreign intruder, most and foremost, and due to the fact that for years the Christians in Lebanon tended to be assisted by the French people, in order to conquer other parts and areas in their hegemony in Lebanon. The European missionary activity in general, and the French, in particular, were greatly and significantly enhanced during the beginning of the 19th century. Emir Bashir began to fight the Druze families, crumbing them to reinforce his rule. He declared his overt conversion to Christianity and an unconcealed struggle against the Druze leadership, which assisted him to be elected. His biggest enemy was Sheikh Bashir Junbalat, who was a very influential leader, very rich, and was characterized by wisdom and great leadership talent. However he failed to face a number of combined forces, including the Emir Bashir, who recruited the representatives of the Ottoman Empire, and the Egyptian governor, Muhammad Ali, against the Druze leadership.
He succeeded in killing Lady Habus Arselan, who was the leader of the central section among Druze, after the death of her husband. He also murdered the head of the second section, Sheikh Bashir Junbalat, as well as

many other leaders. Emir Bashir exterminated the Druze hegemony in the Lebanon Mountain, which succeeded, in some form, ever since the 8th century.

The Druze achieved at their highest power under the rule of Emir Fakher El Din Elmaani II, who ruled between 1585 and 1633. When he died, there was a retreat in the Druze hegemony, which became more rapid when the Shihabs began to rule.

On the same time, the Druze concentration in the Druze Mountain in Syria reinforced, when the Druze emigration from Lebanon Mountain to Huran mountain grew stronger. The Druze settlement in Lebanon became weaker, but was not exterminated. The Christians, and especially the Maronites, strengthened their power when Emir Bashir Shihabi ceased ruling, in 1840. The Ottoman authorities, under the advice of France and England representatives, reinforced and enlarged their extent of involvement in Lebanon, introduced a new kind of regime: the appointment of two governors, one Druze and the other Christian. This period lasted for 20 years, but was filled with Druze-Maronite clashes and with much killing and slaughter on both adversaries. The biggest clash occurred in 1860 and led to the intervention of the big powers, which determined the new order in Lebanon that lasted until the First World War. The events of 1860 are notorious in the history of Lebanon. Hundreds of people were slaughtered by each other: Druze, Muslims and Maronites. In Damascus Muslim inhabitants slaughtered thousands of Christians. The echoes and repercussions of events stirred up the rulers of the West, who pressured the Sultan and his government to silence the area. Many soldiers came to Lebanon and Damascus and stopped the massacre. Special courts were established, which decided upon the enactment of death penalties, imprisonment or exile and exercising them upon various leaders.

The great powers established a new delegation, to determine a new arrangement in the rule in Lebanon. The arrangement included the appointment of an Armenian governor for the Lebanon Mountains, by the Sultan, who will be directly subordinate to him. He would enjoy complete and full execution authorities, which would enable him to maintain public order and security, and to perform all roles and assignments of a proper rule. Each congregation would appoint its own representative, who would represent it and its interests in the governor's court. Also, an administrative council with 12 members would be constructed, when two delegates would represent each congregation. The mountain would be divided into six counties, and the biggest congregation in that county will choose the

governor of each county. In 1861 the first governor, Dawood Pasha, was chosen. The new arrangement led to prosperity in Lebanon, economic flourishing, political stability and civic relaxation.
The Druze eventually accepted the fact that they become only a secondary force in Lebanon, and that they were no longer the all mighty rulers, as they have been in the last decades. Lebanon was opened to foreign influence. Missionaries and emissaries from all European countries developed and constructed schools, hospitals, monasteries, consulates and influential forces. All these activities were most beneficiaries for the Christians, and the Druze were able to enjoy these, but only indirectly.

The two big families among Druze were the Arselan and Janbalats. They alternated in determining their upper representatives to the governor of Lebanon. The competition on hegemony between these two Druze families lasted until present time.

The political stability and economic relaxation, which prevailed in Lebanon in the last term of the 19th century led to recovery in culture and education in Lebanon, also among the Druze. Schools were established by the mission and by other local factors and initiators. The Druze leaders supported and encouraged this and made competitions between them as to that would send more children to school. The result was the appearance of an important group of spirituals and intellectuals, inside the "darkness" imposed by the Empire on its inhabitants, while oppressing all signs of enlightenment and education. One of the most important cultural enterprises in this period was the establishment of the Syrian Scientific Association, by prince Muhammad Arslan, in 1847, which fostered and supported scientific research and cultural activity, and was acknowledged by Ottoman authorities. A few Druze youngsters completed their medical studies in Constantinople and returned to their villages as famous Doctors.
Others completed law, engineering and other academic studies.
There were also many journalists, writers and poets.

It was in this period when inside Lebanon arouse the buds of the Arab nationality by intellectuals from all congregations, including the Druze.
The Ottoman authorities oppressed any local national enterprise and ruled in the Arab countries strongly. The echoes of the nationalist movement in the West were also heard in the Arab countries, especially Syria and Lebanon.

The intellectual young Druze participated in the construction of secret and overt political movements. However the silent majority remained quiet and activity was focused in the hands of a few. In Lebanon the Druze

experienced no special events until the First World War and the beginning of the French rule on Syria and Lebanon, later.

Chapter Three

History of the Druze in Palestine

The Druze have lived in Palestine since the establishment of the Druze religion, in the beginning of the 11th century. The first missionaries of religion came to the area and found fertile soil, attentiveness and actual cooperation. In the local Druze tradition there were many religious men who lived in the area and worked hard in order to establish and base faith among the population. Two main areas in Palestine played an important role in this issue: the first was the Western Galilee, around the village Yarka, where the biggest and most famous religious leader of that period operated, Sheikh Abu Saraia Ganaiem. His grave is still in Yarka and is now a pilgrimage site. In the surrounding villages, such as Amka, Kwikat, Hanbala, Jat, and others – additional leaders operated, too, and their graves are still in their place. In this area the emissaries operated in Safad, Tiberias and Nazareth, and there was a tight connection between the believers in these areas and the believers in south Lebanon.

The second area, which was highly active in this area, was Ramla and Lod, where a large Arab tribe lived, the Bnei Tai tribe, which ruled the centre of Israel and willingly accepted the faith in the Druze religion, and fought for its establishment and reinforcement in the area.

In the Druze tradition there is reference of many leaders and people from that period, who operated in Palestine and who fought to maintain their existence. The Druze who lived in Palestine are called, in the religious books, by the nickname "Banei Turab", that is: sons of the land. In Druze folklore the land is very important and highly respected, and it is receives a status similar to holy shrine.

The Druze settlement in Israel was highly reinforced after the Hittin fight, in 1187, between the crusaders and the Muslim forces, under the

leadership of Sultan Salah El Din. The Druze fought the crusaders from the moment they appeared in Lebanon and Palestine, and they suffered greatly in these wars. They participated in large numbers in the important fight in Hittin. According to the Druze tradition, in the big victory achieved in Hittin in the fight in Karnei Hittin, near the grave of prophet Shuaib, Jethro urged the winning commander, Salah El Din, to construct a structure around the grave, in order to store the Druze pilgrimages and prayers. It was actually an official recognition by a qualified Muslim Sunni body in the Druze community, which was hunted all its life by the surrounding people, in the claim of heresy.

Another reinforcement for the Druze settlement in Palestine took place under the rule of Ameer Fakher El Din El Maa'ni II (1585-1635), who conquered almost all Palestine, and ruled it. He constructed in the Carmel, in the beginning of the 17th century, 16 Druze settlements, and strengthened the Druze villages in the Galilee.

In the end of the 17th century the Druze, residents of Halab, experienced harsh persecution by the Ottoman governor in the area. In this period the Druze leader Ali Junblat lived in the area. He assisted about 500 Druze families that lived in Halab area to find shelter in villages in Lebanon and Palestine. These families, which were part of the big clans in Halab area, received the title "Halabi", a person whose origin was in Halab, and this is how they are still called, and they can be found in many villages in Israel and Lebanon.

In 1711 there was a severe fight in Lebanon, between the armies of the two Druze sections, which were in a state of conflict with each other. The supporters of the defeated section had to leave Lebanon and to move to the Druze Mountain, in Syria, and to Palestine. The emigration to Palestine from Lebanon was massive and serious, the emigrants were members of various families, and they spread to all Druze villages in the Galilee and the Carmel. There is strong evidence for Druze settlements in Safad, Acre, Metula, the Banias, Shefaram, Wadi Salame, etc. In the end of the 18th century there was the biggest number of Druze villages in Palestine ever. Written evidence from this period point on the existence of very lively and vital communal and religious lives and firm internal solidarity and consolidation. Indeed, the Ottoman authorities did not make it easy for the Druze, and they collected taxes and recruited soldiers. However, the Druze knew how to handle and accept these. In the 18th century there were two non-Druze local governors in the area, who embittered the small Druze community's lives. These were D'aher El Omar (1737-1775) and Ahmad

Pasha El Jazzer (1776-1804). They both schemed and alienated toward the Druze and made them pay higher taxes. However they did not fight them and like the Egyptian conqueror Ibrahim Pasha, who occupied Syria, Lebanon and Palestine in 1831 and fought against the Druze of the Druze mountain in Syria, he was unable to defeat them. He also fought against the Lebanon's Druze and when he retreated in 1839 back to Egypt, he caused trouble between the villages surrounding the Druze villages and pushed them toward attacks, and even the destruction of them. The Druze of the Carmel suffered greatly from this, and the result was that the residents of the 16 villages gathered in the two villages, Dalia and Usfia, and the others were abandoned. The same is true for the villages in the Galilee, whose residents gathered in a number of villages in order to better protect themselves and their existence. Since 1840 the Druze have lived in 18 settlements only, and these exist today.

The total number of Druze residents in Palestine in the 19th century was only a few thousands. They were, by no scale, a serious force. Their relationships with their brothers in Syria and Lebanon were close and tight. Their brothers in the Golan Heights' villages assisted them greatly. For example: the residents of Daliat El Carmel were welcomed and found shelter and hospitality in Majdal Shams in 1840, after they became involved in a bloody struggle with one of the surrounding villages, as a result of a quarrel over blood vengeance. All residents returned after one year of exile and continued to live in the village while quarrels, plotting and persecutions of the surrounding Muslims and Bedouins villages took place. In the 1860 events in Lebanon, when an exceptional, unusual mutual massacre between Druze and Maronites in Lebanon took place – the Druze in Palestine assisted in welcoming and sheltering their brothers, who had to go to exile, after the intervention of the nations. The local Druze also participated in the local revolts of the Druze in Horan mountain in Syria, against the Ottoman authorities, when the latter exaggerated. The Druze Mountain, which was the shelter of persecuted Druze and non-Druze all around the Ottoman Empire, was also a shelter for Druze in Palestine, who were persecuted by authorities.

In the Eighties of the 19th century there was a general comprehensive event in Palestine, which unified all Druze and created a common denominator. The leaders of the community decided to renew and reconstruct the structure around the grave of Shuaib, Itro, in Hittin. For this purpose, a delegation of three most distinguished men from Yarka, Rama and Smai villages was assembled, and began a contribution campaign in

villages in Syria and Lebanon. The goal of this campaign was to collect money for renovating the holy site. The very existence of this delegation, and its arrival, in the name of this sacred goal, to the villages in Syria and Lebanon – led to the awareness of the Druze in these settlings to the existence of Druze population in Palestine. The delegation was received very enthusiastically and in great warmth in these settlements. The sums of money collected were relatively high, if we take into account the prevailing economical condition, and the delegation returned, a few months later, with much money, and, not less important, a huge emotional load, which caused the reinforcement of solidarity between the Druze Diaspora, and gave the few Druze residents of Palestine a feeling that they were not alone and that they had a wide and strong backing and support. Until then, the Druze in Palestine tried to maintain a low profile and not to be too prominent. When the delegation returned and the Jethro grave's site was renovated, the Druze leaders proclaimed the 25th of April 1882, as the day of inauguration of the site. Hundreds of Druze from all villages, and from neighbouring countries, gathered, and the event was celebrated. This has become a traditional holiday ever since. Moreover, the Druze felt quite secure, and demanded the Ottoman authorities to accept and proclaim them a separate community, and to establish special courts for them. This requirement was not accepted, but the very reference of the issue was new and typical character of the society in the end of the 19th century.

In that period there was another event, that created a sense of security among the community members. In 1882 Sir Lawrence Olyphant visited Daliat El Carmel. He was a journalist, writer and one of righteous of the nations. He was searching for a relaxation place for his sick wife, and found what he was looking for in the western end of Dalia. The residents gave him land for free and received him with open arms and much affection. In return, he assisted them greatly in their connections with authorities. Olyphant built a house in Dalia and lived in it for two years. During this period, his wife died, and he preferred to leave and to travel. His secretary was Naftali Hertz Imber, the Jewish poet who composed "Hatikva", the national hymn of Israel.

Thanks to Olyphant and his secretary, many important people visited the area, including consuls and others. This step also led to a sense of security and confidence among the Druze and ended their long period of solitude.

In the 19th century there were some remarkable Druze political leaders in the area, such as the leaders from the Mua'di family, from Yarka

village, who maintained extensive connections with the Druze in Lebanon and were known, in the north, as owners of assets, influence and domination among the entire population. Religiously, a few families were very important, the first of which was the Nafa' family, from Beit Jan, which was famous and known as the community's leader for generations. The leadership was transferred, by free will, to the Tariff family in Julis, and next to the Khir family from Abu Snan. Throughout time the Druze spiritual leadership was consisted of the three families: Mua'di, Tariff and Khir.

The residents lived in small and distant villages. There were only a few thousand inhabitants. They could not form a large community, and in order to look after themselves they had to be alert and watchful. The attacks they experienced came from two sources: the Ottoman authorities and the various governors, who hunted and persecuted the Druze community in order to collect more taxes and to recruit young people to the army. The second source of plotting was the hostile Muslim and Bedouin neighbours, who continued to regard to the Druze as a separate religious cult.

When the First World War began, the population experienced its most severe and greatest suffering. All young people at the age for recruitment were recruited by force, by the Ottoman authorities, and were thrown to the front, in distance places. Many of them ran away before and during their recruitment. The Ottoman soldiers raided houses and boycotted food, dressings, tools and money. In villages such as Daliat El Carmel Ottoman military units were assigned, and they made the lives of the inhabitants bitter and hard. The population's conditions were very bad and almost intolerable. Everyone felt relieved when the Ottoman Empire was defeated and its heavy shadow has passed away.

The British mandate, as a rule, was good for the population in the sense that it did not annoy and interfere with their lives. It did not assist a great deal, but it enabled the inhabitants to live their lives.

The authorities of the British mandate had no special position and attitude toward the Druze. After World War 1 there were no more than 7000 to 8000 inhabitants, and they were not too prominent. For many years the Druze in Lebanon and in Palestine had fostered illusions and hopes for special connections with the Englishmen. There was a little foundation for this, especially in Lebanon, where the French fostered the Christians, especially the Maroons. Since there was an imperialistic competition between England and France in the East, the Druze looked for the Englishmen's closeness and initiated connections with the various British consuls. There were good relations with the English consul, Richard Wood,

in the Forties of the 19th Century, and with the consul Richard Birton in the Seventies. English travellers enjoyed a special hospitality and supportive treatment when they visited the Druze villages, and there are evidences for this in their books. The authorities of the Ottoman Empire have treated the Druze harshly, especially on a religious background. Therefore, the Druze were pleased when the government in Palestine was replaced. The Druze hoped to translate the connections that were made with former English representatives into a basis for creating tight relationships with the Mandate authorities, but the Mandate was apathetic and indifferent towards the Druze. It gave them no special priority. On the other hand, it had no reason to persecute them or to harm them, as was before.

The Druze during the Mandate continued to suffer hostile treatment by the Muslim environment. The Sunni majority referred to the Druze as a retiring religious group, and acted in a hostile manner towards them. Druze Sheiks or women feared to walk overtly in the big cities, and many of them experienced hostile expressions, revulsion and contempt, whenever they visited in the city. The villages in the Carmel suffered from persecutions, robbery and from a violent treatment from nearby villages. These were daily acts, and the small Druze population found the answer, or the ways to survive and to defend, however, whenever something drastic came out, which justified application to authorities, the authorities used to relate seriously to the problem and were supportive in resolving it.

Environmental problems were well felt during the Arab revolt against the mandate, in 1936. The Arab rebels assassinated famous and important Druze figures, claiming that they were collaborating with the Jews, just as they killed Muslim figures, in the same claim. The rebels used to attack the Druze villages in the night, commanded the poor inhabitants to give them food, a place to sleep and various commodities, to harm and ruin the houses, claiming they were looking for weapons, and sometimes annoyed and plotted against women and children. The feeling of helplessness reached a point in which the Druze in Palestine sent emissaries to the Druze leaders in Syria and Lebanon, asking them to interfere by turning to famous Muslim leaders in Palestine, to stop this behaviour.

In this state of affairs, good and close connections were made between the small Druze minority, which included no more than 10000 inhabitants, and the leaders of the Jewish settlement in Palestine.

In the former centuries, the connections between Druze and Jews were good, although not tight. The Druze governor Fakher El Din El Maa'ni the second, who ruled between 1585 and 1635 in Lebanon, based his rule

upon understanding and tolerance toward minorities. For the first time, since establishment of Islam in the 7th century, Christians and Jews in the Middle East were allowed to carry weapons and to maintain their right freely and fearlessly. Jews who lived in Acre, Tiberias and Safad maintained trading connections with the surrounding Druze villages. The Jews in Pukaia'a lived in this village for centuries and enjoyed the protection of Druze. In Pukaia'a a Jewish family still lives today. In Shefaram Jews lived, next to Druze, for many years.

The first connection with the Jewish establishment was created in 1930. Yizhak Ben Zvi, one of the leaders of the settlement and later the president, visited the two villages Mughar and Rama, and met Druze Mukhtars. Local young activists who lived in Tiberias and Acre maintained and reinforced the connection. Another centre of Druze-Jewish relation was created in the Carmel, between residents of Usfia and members of Yagur, the neighbouring Kibbutz. After a while Aba Khoushi, the secretary of the Haifa labourers' council and a famous leader who deepened his acquaintance with the famous members of the Abu Rukun family in Usfia, as well as other important figures, entered this circle. In 1936 the British authorities intended to arrest Aba Khoushi, claiming that he practised forbidden political activity. He hid in the house of Sheikh Labib Abu Rukun for several months, until the issue was settled. This act had strengthened the connections between the two sides, and they considered each other as an ally.

The mutual relationship widened to other villages and included people from Daliat El Carmel, Hurfaish, Abu Snan, Yarka, Beit Jan, etc.

The Arab revolt, which burst in 1936, and the rude behaviour of the rebels toward the Druze, legitimised this relationship in the eyes of Druze families and some of the villages' inhabitants. The connections between Druze persons and the Jews grew and widened, especially during World War II.

During the Forties these relations continued, and wide and extended trading connections were formed. Jewish merchants bought the tobacco that Druze raised in their fields, and also bought olives, fruits and milk products. There were organized visits by groups of young people. The cooperation deepened until the State of Israel was established.

Not all Druze supported the connections with Jews, and many leaders adopted attitudes of cooperation with and sympathy for the Arab majority in Palestine. There were severe disputes and disagreements amongst Mukhtars of the same village, regarding the best attitude to be

adopted in this dispute. Some people were activists in the Arab national movement, and others maintained connections with the Mufti. This stream was strengthened after the Second World War, since hundreds of Druze from Syria and Lebanon arrived to Palestine in order to find work, and settle there. They came from a different background, and they regarded themselves as completely Arab, they adopted the Arabian line of action and resisted the Zionist movements and its acts in Palestine. However, the actual leaders were the most dominant leaders and the spiritual leadership, whom, from the middle of the Thirties, determined the clear line of cooperation with the Jewish forces, in order to preserve the very existence of the community, and its freedom of religion and cult.

During the British mandate there was a slight improvement in the condition of the total population, including Druze. Schools were opened in almost all Druze villages, but these were only primary schools and in most villages only included the fourth or fifth grades. The population was rural-agricultural. The girls did not go to school and the boys, at the age 10 or 11, were considered adults and expected to join their families to work in agriculture, and in raising sheep, Therefore they did not continue their studies. There was no need for higher classes.

Regarding employment – new opportunities were opened for the Druze population. In the Thirties the Haifa port was built. This project was a source of employment for many workers from Dalia, Usfia and Shefaram. Many were recruited by British police, and others practised trade and services outside the villages. The fact that many people who used to work only inside their villages began to work outside led to progress and to change in the traditional nature of the Druze village. Also, there was a breakthrough of roads that connected the villages and neighbouring cities. Many roads were built during the Second World War, in order to enable mobility and transport capacity for the British forces, which feared the arrival of the German forces to Palestine.

Regarding the communal organization of the Druze in Palestine- it is important to point out that for centuries there was at least one Druze house of prayer in every village. It was managed by a religious man, called "the Imam", who conducted prayers, and was responsible for religious lives, and in charge of all married and divorced couples, on issues of wills, and all problems of personal status. The total of all Imams from all villages compounded the non-formal spiritual leadership of the community. In the Middle Ages the tradition was that the central spiritual leadership was in the hands of the Nafaa' family, in Beit Jan. The members of this family were

famous for their proficiency in the secrets and mysteries of religion, and for being educated, intellectual and honest people. In the 17th century the Nafaa' family gave up spiritual leadership, to the Tariff family in Julis, since the members of the Tariff family took good care of a religious person called Sheikh Ali El Fares. In the 18th and 19th century members of the Tariff family were, in the respect of Druze practice and in coordination with the Druze's leadership in Syria and Lebanon, in charge of religious lives in Palestine, without ever receiving a formal authorization. In the Seventies and Eighties Sheikh Mahana Tariff (1859-1884) initiated the renovation of the structure around the grave of prophet Shuaib, in Kefar Hittin. He organized an expedition that went to Syria and Lebanon to collect contributions and convinced the Druze citizens to contribute money and working days. The site was inaugurated in April 25th, 1882, in a formal ceremony, and ever since this day is a holiday for the Druze community, and it is celebrated even today.

This event projected the Druze as a unified and consolidated community. Sheikh Tariff died in 1884 and was replaced by his brother, Sheikh Muhammad, as the spiritual leader. The latter turned to the Ottoman authorities with a request to accept him as the person in charge of all issues concerning individual, personal status, and the spiritual leader and who had the last say on internal Druze issues. The authorities accepted with and approved his request. Following this, Sheikh Muhammad Tariff was appointed, in 1909, officially, as the judge authorized to judge all issues of personal status. It was a kind of formal recognition in the special status of the Druze community in Israel. However no courts and accompanying institutions were established. Sheikh Muhammad passed away in 1918, and was replaced by his son, Aheikh Amin Tariff.

During the 19th century another two members of different families were partners in leadership: the Khair family from Abu Snan and Mua'di family from Yarka. They managed the community's issues through this period, however, the main leader, who gave the tone, was the member of Tariff family.

In the beginning of the Thirties there was an attempt to change the status quo in the community. Sheikh Abdalla Khair, the first and only academic in that period, initiated the establishment of a council that would supervise Druze issues. Sheikh Amin Tariff opposed this initiative and torpedoed it, and, in turn received the support of the traditional leadership.

Alongside religious leadership there were also political secular leaders. These were the Mukhtars, who were appointed by authorities to

manage the relations between the inhabitants and the country's rule. There were a few Mukhtars in each village, according to the size of the village, and they were usually selected from the big families.

Chapter Four

Settlement of the Druze in Syria

The Druze settlement in Syria is as old as the settlement in Lebanon and Palestine. When the faith was established, at the beginning of the 11^{th} century, many tribes and villages in Halab and in Damascus and North Syria accepted it. In the religious books and in sources of that time there is evidence for glorious Druze communities in those areas. The origin of one of the first five founders of the Druze faith, Baha El Din, was Halab area. There was a real cooperation between the first Druze in Halab and the Druze in Wadi El Teem, around the Hermon. There is no evidence for the existence of Druze in the Druze Mountain in Horan, in this time. The settlement there was in a much later period.

Halab's community was one of the largest and strongest Druze concentrations when the faith was established. It had a large military strength and its leaders had the ability to conquer by force parts of North Syria, however a surprising alliance between Sunnites and Byzantines defeated them and reduced their strength. The Druze of Halab participated in the bloody struggle against the Crusaders in Palestine and suffered many victims.

In Halab the most distinguished family was the Junblat family. The leader, Kasem Junblat, assisted the Ottomans against the Mamluks. He accompanied the Sultan in his conquests in Belgrad, Rhodus and Moldevia, and assisted in the conquest of Pamagosta in Cyprus in the middle of the 16^{th} century.

In 1607 the Junblat family revolted against the Ottomans. The revolt was suppressed viciously and made the Junblat family move from Halab and to find shelter in the Shuff mountains, under the rule of Fakher El Din. In 1810 the Sunnite governor of Halab adopted the principles of the Wahabies

movement. A strong religious pressure was exercised upon the Druze, and they had to leave Halab and to find residence in Lebanon and Palestine. In Halab remained only a small Druze community, which lived in a number of small and neglected villages.

In Damascus, also, there was also an extensive big community, which also suffered from plotting and scheming by authorities and the neighbours, and it also shrank, however the Druze settlement in it continued to be relatively big and strong, especially in periods when Lebanon was ruled by the big Druse families that protected the settlement in Damascus.

In Syria there was a small Druze settlement that maintained its size and status for a thousand years. This is the settlement surrounding the Hermon Mountain. There are many Druze villages from the establishment of faith until today. They succeeded to hold on both due to their remoteness from the power centres, and therefore posed no threat, and due to their closeness to the strong Druze settlements in South Lebanon and in Palestine.

The biggest and strongest Druze settlement in the latest period is in the Druze Mountain in Horan, in south Syria. This settlement was probably not populated with Druze in the former periods. Bedouin tribes lived there, a few Christians and small concentrations of Muslims. The area is a rocky geographical unit, topographically stiff, and it was inconvenient to live there. Therefore, no big tribes were attracted to it, except for those banished or persecuted, who found protection and a hiding place.

There are evidences for the existence of a certain number of Druze inhabitants in Horan mountain, in the beginning of the 17th century, under the rule of Ameer Fakher El Din ii. The Ameer sent his son, Ali, to the area, a few times, in order to assist Muslim tribes against other tribes, and to introduce law and order in the area. In 1630 the Ameer Fakher El Din made a visit to Damascus, and ordered to renovate the Salkhad fortress, for the inhabitants of the area. There is evidence for the existence of several Druze families in Horan mountain also throughout the 17th century. In 1685 one of the princess of Maa'n family moved from Lebanon to the mountain area, along with about 200 warriors. They settled in the centre of the mountain. Plundering Bedouins tried to attack them, however they defeated them. By this they received rights for this property. This prince stayed in the area for about four years, until he decided to return to Lebanon with his men.

In 1691 brothers from the Hamdan family arrived, as refugees, after they were accused in the murder of four brothers from the rivalling branch in Lebanon. The most senior brother, Hamdan El Hamdan, was lucky, and he found a treasure in one of the ruins, which made him very rich. He settled

in the house of the prince, who returned to Lebanon, and bought his lands and property. Meanwhile, other Druze came from Lebanon and settled in the mountain. A serious push to the Druze settlement in Horan mountain was in 1711, after the Ein Dara fight in Lebanon, between the two branches of Druze: Kaiss and Yaman. The people of the defeated Yaman branch left Lebanon. Many of them arrived at Horan, and other arrived to south Lebanon and Palestine.

Horan became the main target for each persecuted or disappointed Druze, or for those Druze looking for adventures or a new future. The first Druze overcame, in a bloody fight, the resistance of the Bedouins. Within a few years they built houses, worked the land, planted trees and brought prosperity in the half-desert area. At first they settled in ruins and abandoned villages or houses, but after a short while they succeeded in organizing communal lives, with a clear hierarchic social order. Each village, even the smallest ones, appointed a Mukhtar and a religious figure, and other delegates were sent to Lebanon and Palestine and the Halab area, and called the people there to come and settle in the mountain. During the 17th century many families moved from various areas and built homes and farms in the mountain area, and after a while brought their friends and relatives. This process of emigration, domination and establishment in a new and hostile area called for strong and serious leadership. The leadership that headed this move and directed it toward its own good and the good of the total population was the Hamdan family. This family originates in a dynasty that ruled in Halab area in the 10th century. They received the call for the Druze faith in the 11th century, joined it and fought for it. They also suffered from the suppression of its opponents in a later phase, and had to leave Halab and move to the Shuff Mountains. Hamdan El Hamdan and his brothers quarrelled with their neighbours in 1691 and had to emigrate to Horan, where Hamdan discovered an ancient treasure, which made him rich. As a consequence he became a leader and organized the emigration of Druze families. He settled them in the various villages, gave them assistance for constructing homes and for buying cattle and cows, and in return he claimed for one percent of the annual crop. With time, he and his men ruled all villages that accepted his authority. Hamdan has appointed his relatives and his men as Mukhtars in the villages and introduced a kind of feudal system. The rule of the Hamdan family lasted for almost 160 years. In the Sixties of the 19th century the rule was transferred to the El Atrash family.

The Ottoman authorities did not intervene in the process of Druze' settlement in the mountain, on the contrary: they welcomed the fact that the

Druze restrained the Bedouins, who used to attack and plunder the surrounding settlements, and caused troubles and problems to the authorities and governor. Moreover, the Bedouins interrupted the movement of the pilgrimages to Mecca, that came from the North and passed close to the area. The Druze promised a secured and safe passage of the pilgrimages and the trading convoy that passed the area, and by this they prevented the bother of authorities. The Druze also enjoyed a sense of freedom and independence, accumulated strength, and with time they organized and consolidated as a military force, which forged and strengthened year after year, as a result of the struggles with Bedouins. The first serious challenge they faced was their fight against the Egyptian intruder, Ibrahim Pasha.

Ibrahim Pasha, the son of the governor of Egypt, Muhammad Ali, conquered Syria and Palestine and even arrived at Constantinople in 1831. He introduced new arrangements, and made the lives of the local population much more difficult. The Druze who lived in the Horan mountain resisted this policy and revolted against it. The reasons for the revolts were the following:

1. The recruitment of young boys to the military: There was a recruitment obligation for all mature youth, for a period of 15 years. The recruited were sent to the front lines in various places, in poor conditions.
2. A general disarmament and collecting all weapons owned by the population. The Druze needed their guns in order to protect themselves against the attacks of the Bedouins. Their disarmament weakens them and harms their status and prestige.
3. He treated economy harshly. He introduced heavy taxes, boycotted agricultural corps and merchandises and prevented basic commodities from the population.
4. A harsh damage for the population. The Egyptian soldiers hurt women, expropriated houses in order to live in them during their service in the area, and acted rudely and arrogantly toward the population.

The Druze in the area raised the standard of revolt. Ibrahim Pasha scorned them and sent, in the beginning, a small military force, against them. This was almost completely destroyed. The Egyptians sent stronger and bigger military forces, but this also failed. Ibrahim Pasha felt humiliated, and therefore he organized a force of over 20000 warriors, commanded it himself and attacked the mountain. The Druze were trained, they gathered the women and children, put them in a safe place in the mountains, and went

on fighting and repulse the big army. There were no more than 2000 Druze warriors. Ibrahim Pasha tried to use all possible ways of fighting, but failed to defeat them. There were over 3000 victims in his march, in addition to thousands of victims in the previous marches. Therefore, he used a very cruel step. The Horan mountain is on the desert border and the climate in it is dry desert climate. Ibrahim Pasha looked for the sources of water, obstructed the sources he was able to obstruct, and poisoned the other wells. By this he dried the throats of the Druze warriors and their family members. The Druze held long discussions and decided to surrender and to speak with the Egyptian governor. Ibrahim Pasha was not cruel to them; he appreciated their heroism and resistance, imposed only light punishments upon them and made peace with them. They gave from their own will 700 guns and were allowed to keep the rest. Ibrahim Pasha promised them he will not recruit them to the army, and asked them to continue guarding the area from attacks of Bedouins and to secure the roads to Mecca. In the last phases of the revolt in Horan another Druze revolt burst, in the Hermon, which was aimed at assisting the revolt in Horan. The revolt in Horan also ended in peace making, and the Druze maintained their status there, also.

Ibrahim Pasha retreated from Syria in 1840. The rule returned to the Ottoman authorities and the sultan in Constantinople. The revolt against the Egyptians improved the status of the Druze and directed the attention of the powers, the Ottoman governments and the various governors, to the existence of a strong and dominant group in Lebanon and in the mountain area. The existence of such force was a challenge for the Ottoman authorities, which could not have allowed themselves to leave an almost autonomous region inside the Empire free of recruitment, taxes and direct control by them. This might have led to the revolt of other regions. The Ottomans drew no lessons from the bitter experience of the Egyptians and believed they would achieve better results. The Ottomans' attempts to cast their authority on the Druze Mountain in Horan lasted for about 10 years. The Ottomans sent emissaries and small forces and tried to involve also the British consul in Damascus, Richard Wood, in order to convince the Druze to accept the Ottoman rule. When they failed to do so, they organized a military force of 21000 warriors under the command of Coprosly Pasha. This army attacked the mountain near the town Azroa', but was pushed by well trained and experienced Druze and Bedouin warriors. Druze forces unplugged the supply lines of the force, which led to its failure and to its return to Damascus with no results. This was in 1852. A similar attempt was in 1857, and it also failed.

In this period there was a change in the leadership of the mountain. The Hamdan family ruled for over 150 years, its rule was sometimes harsh and led to bitterness and resentment in the population. In the first period of the Druze settling in the mountain the families received the authority of Hamdan family without doubt, since they needed it, however, after the end of the revolt against the Egyptians, which lasted for years, the Druze warriors forged and a new wind began to blow amongst the inhabitants. The same warriors who dared fighting against the great Egyptian commander, and succeeded in defeating him, found it difficult to surrender to the exaggerated requirements of the Hamdan family. In the same time, the El Atrash family settled in the southern area of the mountain, under the leadership of Isme'el El Atrash. The southern area of the mountain suffered from attacks of the desert Bedouins. It was abandoned during the revolt against the Egyptians. Isme'el El Atrash and his people stood still and succeeded in facing the attacks of the Bedouins, and introduced order and defence in the area. Then they called the Druze in the North and other places to resettle in the southern area of the mountain.

In this period there were severe developments in Lebanon. The communal events in 1860 between the Druze and Christians caused the intervene of the powers in favour of the Christians, along with the Ottoman Empire, and cast heavy punishments upon the Druze there. As a result, many Druze emigrated from Lebanon and settled in Horan. Many of these accepted the call of Isme'el El Atrash to settle in the south. This is how the act of resettling was performed, under the leadership of the El Atrash family. This family succeeded in acquiring the trust of the new settlers, as well as the support of the older ones, who detested the oppression by the Hamdan family. This family lost its status in the mountain and ceased to lead and influence. The complete control moved to the El Atrash family.

There was also an internal emigration from the Halab area, mount Hermon and Palestine. The number of the Druze in the mountain grew rapidly. The restrictions upon the Druze in Lebanon caused the superiority to transfer to the Druze in Horan. The Ottomans tried, throughout this period, to enforce their authority upon the mountain's inhabitants, however they failed to do this. Every once in a while small policing force was sent, and they were easily defeated. The Druze in the mountain grew bigger, cultivated and worked it properly, made nice profits from it and built their houses and villages in a remarkable way. The persecuted and refugees learned, with time, to escape to the Druze mountain and to find in it a safe

shelter from authorities. Druze people, who refused to recruit, and others, arrived from all villages and hid there, until they felt it was safer.

The Ottoman authorities understood they would not be able to take over the Druze by force; therefore they stopped these attempts and focused in a different manner on weakening the population. They saw that the El Atrash family is taking over the leadership in all Druze villages in the mountain. This leadership meant holding a quarter of the village's lands, collecting taxes, farmers' dependence upon them and using the inhabitants in occasional works, and constant intervene in their internal issues. Probably as a result of an Ottoman influence, the farmers revolted in 1889 against Sheikhs of the villages and the El Atrash family. This was a massive and effective revolt, and achieved immediate results. The heads of the villages abandoned their villages and found shelter in a farm near the town Swida, the mountain's capital. The defeat of the leadership was so serious, that Ibrahim El Atrash, the mountain's leader, asked for assistance from the Ottoman authorities, and it was the first time, in the annals of the Druze mountain, that someone asked for assistance of authorities. The latter, of course, were glad to intervene. The leaders of the Druze religion in the mountain watched the developments and mediated between the quarrelling sides, and actually introduced relaxation with no Ottoman military intervention. The farmers received many rights and stopped threatening the leaders. After a while it was found that the villages' heads do not intend to keep their promises. In 1890 another revolt began. The heads of families escaped to Damascus and found shelter there. Then the Ottoman Empire intervened and used the split in the Druze society, and easily penetrated into the mountain. The authorities sent an army in an excuse that it is aimed to separate the quarrellers; the army settled in Swida and dictated its terms to the population. For the first time, an Ottoman army was allowed to camp in the centre of the mountain.

From their success to penetrate to the mountain and to split its inhabitants, decided to subjugate them finitely. They demanded a compulsory recruitment and general disarmament. The inhabitants resisted, and the result was wars and fights between both parties, throughout the years up to World War one.

During the First World War Jamal Pasha was appointed Syria's governor. He was one of the central leaders in that time, in the Ottoman Empire. Jamal Pasha granted respect and honour to the Druze in the mountain. He knew what role they played in protecting from the Bedouins' attacks, and in securing the Hajj's convoys. Moreover, his army was in

need of the grains the Druze grow in their lands. Therefore, he did not recruit them, and allowed them to keep their arms. Jamal Pasha cooperated with the mountain's leader in that period, Ameer Salim El Atrash, who was pro Ottoman, and supported them in war.

Most Druze remembered the Ottomans' sustained persecutions, which bothered and annoyed them for over four hundred years, and did not tend to support them in war. Many of them prayed for the removal of their rule and for independence. When the big Arab revolt burst, under the leadership of Shariff Hussein, in the Arab peninsula, against the Ottoman rule in support and assistance by Britain and the Allies, the Druze perceived it as the adequate time to get rid of the Ottoman burden. Sultan El Atrash, a young and promising leader, began his first steps by leading a branch of his family. He supported the Arab revolt and joined it. Sultan and his men assisted Ameer Feisel, the son of Shariff Hussein, to conquer Damascus and to pronounce independence from the Ottoman rule.

The Druze mountain was split to two sections: those who opposed and those who supported the Ottomans, however, there was no clash between them.

When the war ended, the mountain's inhabitants were relieved by the removal and elimination of the Ottoman rule. They hoped for a better future under independence, which was assured to all Arabs, by the British.

Ameer Feisel appointed Salim El Atrash, rather than his ally Sultan as the mountain's governor. Sultan was strong and wise enough to restraint himself and to ignore this, in order to prevent from creating a split. For two years the Druze Mountain was calmed, and was ruled by Salim El Atrash and the leaders of the big families.

When the French mandate was imposed on Syria, the supporters of the Ottomans in the past supported the French, while Sultan and his men supported Ameer Feisel and the British. The French first tended to foster and to take care of the Druze, to support them and to be assisted by them. They established four states in Syria, including the Druze mountain state, for the first time in history.

The Druze and the French Mandate

When World War one started, the Druze have already succeeded in founding and establishing their status in the Druze mountain, after conquering the land in their own blood. Despite their small number, they succeeded to create an image of fearless warriors and as a community capable of defending its respect and maintenance. They had a history filled with wars and fights against strong armies and leaders.

Therefore, the French saw them as a community that it is better to compromise with, than fight against. This was also in line with their policy of associating and maintaining connections with the national minorities, against the Sunnite majority. The first act of the French in the mountain was the establishment of the Druze land, alongside the establishment of other small states.

The Druze that fought for their existence under the Ottoman Empire and now wished for a self-rule favoured the establishment of a state. In 20/12/1920 a convention of a whole-Druze congress was held in Swida, in which political leaders, army men, the spiritual leadership and representatives of the villages, who decided to establish the state, participated. In this congress there were also decisions regarding the constitutional aspects of the state, the relationship with the mandate authorities, internal policy, and relationships with the rest of the states and communities in Syria. In 20/4/1921 General Guru proclaimed the establishment of the first government, under the presidency of Ameer Salim El Atrash. It was determined in the state's constitution that the governor will be Druze and will be elected every three years.

The relationship between the Druze and the French rule became worse, due to a bad treatment of the Druze population, by the French bureaucracy, and due to incidents with the local leadership. In 1922 there was a local revolt against the French, on the background of the incidence of Adham Khanjar (a Muslim refugee who found a shelter in Sultan's house, but was arrested by authorities when Sultan was not present, which was perceived as an offence of the Druze).

The Druze revolt

The Druze revolt against the French mandate's authorities was one link in a series of Druze revolts against a foreign conqueror, which offended them and harmed them. The Druze lived under the Ottoman rule in a close society, which had a lifestyle and values that rejected and disfavoured any attempt to intervene in its internal issues. All efforts by previous rulers to enforce their will and authority upon Druze failed. Therefore, the Druze were not used to be passive and not react when offended, or to submit to the dictations and orders of a certain rule. The Frenchmen first understood and accepted this, and their treatment toward the Druze was tolerable. The Frenchmen also had the interest of becoming closer to minorities, in order to found and reinforce their rule.

Some relate to the Druze revolt as a communal revolt, as a result of a French offence and insult of the Druze honour. However, some relate to it as a national revolt aimed at the French mandate, and supporting independence and release. There is no doubt that the Frenchmen were furious of the Druze because of their revolt, since their intention was, first of all, to foster the community and to make it an ally, which assists them in fulfilling their goals. As a result, the Druze suffered throughout all mandate years from a hostile attitude by authorities, as opposed to their treatment to the Alawies, who participated in the revolt, and throughout all years of mandate never caused any serious problems.

However, despite the fact that the Druze lost in the military battle, they succeeded in forcing the Frenchmen to treat them with respect and to use ways fitting their customs, tradition and way of life. The failure of the reforms of General Kirbi also caused a failure of the attempts to break the traditional leadership and the prevailing social system' of feudal-like relations between a thin layer of land owners and the many farmers. This leadership, which was represented by the El Atrash family, headed by the leader of the revolt, Sultan, not only maintained its status, but also strengthened it, since it succeeded in presenting itself as defending the honour of the Druze from foreign intervention. Sultan El Atrash's popularity reached a climate when he returned to Syria, in 1936, as a result of the optimistic climate in Syria after the signing of contracts. Sultan also appeared as a national hero and was accepted in open arms in Damascus and within the non-Druze Syrian public.

The 1925 revolt elevated the Druze' prestige among the Syrian public and the Arab states, and introduced them a reputation of a small, yet

strong community, capable of handling big operations, despite its poor resources and limited capabilities. This fact highly assisted the Druze after Syria received its independence.

The content of one of the paragraphs in the agreement of 1936 was the unification of Syria and the cancellation of all autonomous frames of all minorities, including the Druze minority. The contracts were not executed, and the Druze mountain state still existed. In 1936 they received a Muslim governor, Naseeb El Bakry, who was accepted on many Druze as a national leader, but not as a governor. Internal disputes arose between isolationists and the leaders and forces that wished to integrate in a unified Syrian state. This dispute was postponed, since the contracts were not approved, and the status quo prevailed. Naseeb El Bakry was appointed the mountain's governor, and he himself was replaced by Hasan El Atrash, according to the inhabitants' demand.

During World War II there were no significant developments among the Druze in Syria. They behaved just like all others. In 1946 Syria received independence and as a result all small states were denied and cancelled, including the Druze mountain state.

Chapter Five

The Druze today

The Druze today live in big congregations in the Middle East and in small communities in the world. Their total number is between 1.5 to 2 million inhabitants. In Syria there are around 700000 Druze inhabitants, in Lebanon around 500000, in Israel around 100000, in Jordan around 30000 and in all other Arab states – around 50000.

At the end of the 19th century many Druze, along with other religions, emigrated from Syria and Lebanon, to the United States, Latin America, Europe and Australia. With time, the Druze also arrived at the African states, wtih the aim of work and making a living, and settled there. The biggest concentration is in the United States and Canada. There are around 100000 inhabitants in the various states. The Druze there are associated in a general organization called American Druze Society. It maintains every year a social gathering, including families, in order to discuss general Druze issues, and to make acquaintances between male and female members of community, in order to enable, as much as possible, inter-communal marriages. There are also large concentrations in states as Brazil, Venezuela, Argentina and Australia. In every such state there are tens of thousands of Druze. There are small communities in various European and African countries. Several families live in Asia and the Middle East.

There is no international Druze organization that maintains connections between the various communities, but except for Israel, there are relationships between the various congregations and the Druze religious leadership in Lebanon. The last Civil War in Lebanon caused the distortion of connections with Diaspora, however, lately there were renewed efforts to

strengthen and to tighten the connections of the Lebanese community with all communities around the world.

The Druze in Israel were, ever since the establishment of Israel, disconnected from their brothers in Syria and Lebanon. This disconnection troubled and burdened the inhabitants, split families and caused spiritual and cultural isolation. In 1982, after the Lebanon war, when Israel conquered territories until Beirut, for the first time connection was created between the Druze in Israel and Lebanon, which lasted for few years, and eventually was disconnected, when Israel retreated from most Lebanese territory.

In contrast, there has been no relationship with Syria ever since 1948. There is a desire for opening the borders. The relationship with Jordan is good and stable, ever since peace agreement was signed in 1994.

The Druze in Syria today

Syria was released from the French mandate and received its independence without being qualified, in the first place, to exist as a sovereign state, in its own right. The mandate, whose role was to fulfil this mission, only made the contrasts in it more severe, and left it with severe social and economical problems, and deepened the gap between its aspiration to achieve a sovereign self rule and its real capability to maintain this rule. Such condition was convenient for the Druze, since the rule of the Sunni majority has not been established yet, and the transfer to an independent rule could have opened the gates for them to enhance their influence and to penetrate into the administration and to the ruling circles. Once again, the dispute arose among the mountain's inhabitants, whether to use the interim and to demand complete autonomy, or to be annexed to another state, or to remain an un -separated part of the Syrian republic. Pro Hashemic circles demanded to be annexed to the Jordan kingdom (Hasan El Atrash), other circles only asked for internal administrative independence, under the Syrian State. Eventually, the Druze had no choice but to accept the restrictive law, after the autonomy given to them during the mandate was cancelled, and they were now an inseparable part of Syria. Now, when they understood that their chances for receiving some independent framework were disappearing – they intended to appear as a factor and a partner in the central rule. Moreover, they have already constructed themselves an image of a political and military factor, due to the 1925 revolt and to their military past, and so

the other forces and all factors struggling for reaching the top saw them as a natural partner for the government.

In the first few years until the first revolution the Druze's status was weak, and they did not properly enjoy the fruits of the victory that they helped in achieving. Their presence in the Parliament, in the government and in the general administration was not felt, and therefore they had no way of influencing the government or achieving advantages. There were a few reasons for this situation:

1. Internal conflicts, on a social, economical and political basis, which reached their peak in the "El Haia El Shaa'bia" revolt against the El Atrash family. After decades of discrimination and exploitation, the farmers felt that it was time to be released from their dependence on the El Atrash family. This family held the political control of the community and awakened the jealousy of other families. In the head of the struggle was the Abu Asali family, under the support and encouragement of Shukri El Kwatli, one of the supporters of King Ibn Saud, against king Abdalla, the ally of the El Atrash family. The revolt failed, after Sultan has summoned a war council, headed by Hasan El Atrash, and the rebels were defeated in a fight near Baka village. This fight split the unified members of community and weakened them externally, and was one of the reasons they did not achieve the power positions they aspired for.
2. The parliamentary rule that was established in Syria right after independence, based on representation and elections, touched the Druze' weak point: their numerical strength. In the parliament that was elected in 1946 there were only 5 Druze representatives, out of a total of 114 parliament members. In the 1949 elections their number reduced to 3. It is clear that with that number of representatives it was difficult for the Druze to achieve real influence in government.
3. The only Druze leader capable of competing for central rule in Damascus, who had a chance to succeed, was Sultan El Atrash. He was a well honoured and excellent man. He never aspired for senior jobs or powerful positions. Despite the fact that his past and personality shaped his figure as a Syrian national leader, and the fact that he was popular and well accepted by many layers and strata in the Syrian public – he preferred to isolate himself in his village, El Karia, and not to take any part in the rule. Since there were no other leaders like him inside the community – the Druze lost an opportunity to be active partners in leading Syria. Ameer Hasan El

Atrash excelled during the Fifties, however in this period he did not appear as a serious factor.

4. During the mandate and in the long period before its introduction, the Druze lived in autonomous frameworks and structures. They adopted patterns of living and thinking and always followed them. By this, they got used to taking care of internal problems and issues. Their centre of interest was internal rather than external. They, for example, did not aspire to compete on Arab leadership, or to eliminate the French rule because they wanted to free and release Syria from its burden, but rather because it was enforced upon them and they suffered from it directly. The leadership fought over power positions inside and not outside the community, since it was incapable of competing with other leadership on the central ruling, therefore, when Syria received its independence and the Druze mountain's autonomy was removed and cancelled, they found themselves in a situation that had not predicted nor expected, and which they were not prepared for. If we compare, in this issue, the Druze of Syria and the Druze of Lebanon, we will find that in Lebanon the Druze were not politically isolated from the government and central rule, and that they had leaders that fought over the central ruling, such as Kamal Junblat, Majid Arslan and others. However, in Syria they needed a few years to recover and to adapt to the new situation.

This condition, of ineffectuality in the internal Syrian politics, did not last. The Druze moved towards enhanced activity in the era of revolutions that characterized Syria from 1949.

The Zaim revolution

Zaim, as a military figure, knew how to evaluate the uniqueness of the Druze and their excellent military shape. A few months before he began his revolution he secretly met the distinguished Druze, Hasan El Atrash, who promised him the support of the Druze in his struggle against El Kwatli. He also succeeded in recruiting young Druze officers, and some of them attacked Damascus in March 30th, 1949, and occupied the governmental institutions. The Druze had many reasons to support this revolution: the El

Atrash family wished to revenge El Kwatli for being responsible for the El Shaa'biun revolt, which was directed against it, and it is important to remember that this family still was the leader in the mountain area. The central rule in Damascus did nothing for the development and rehabilitation of the mountain after the period of riots there. Also, their political isolation and their feeling that they are losing hold of ruling pushed them toward using the military factor to prove their presence. Zaim was assisted, during his rule, by Ameer Adel Arslan. The Arslan family was not famous for its Druze sentiments, like other families, but rather wrapped itself in a national Arab robe and some of its members appeared as speakers of the Arab nationality in its beginning, like the writer Ameer Shakib Arslan. At first, Zaim appointed Adel Arslan as his personal political assistant, and later as deputy of prime minister and the foreign minister. Arslan highly affected and influenced Zaim's policy, especially his foreign policy. Sultan El Atrash, the mountain's leader, also supported Zaim's rule, in his beginning. Sultan's first visit to Damascus since 1945 was in June 1949, when he came, as the head of an expedition of distinguished and honoured men, to support Zaim. However, Zaim failed to maintain this support, and began to turn his back on all the forces that enabled him to seize a power position, including the Druze. When turning into Egypt and Saudi he lost the support of the Druze known as pro-Hashemites. He suspected them of operating with the Hashemites and the people party against his regime, and sent strong military forces as a garrison to the mountain, in order to frighten the mountain settlements. The two Druze officers Lieutenant Fadlala Abu Mansur and Mayor Amin Abu Asaf, the commander of the armor battalion, who participated in Zaim's revolution, saw this step as a threat to their houses and families. They joined circles that already began to plan his defeat. Among the motives that made the Druze change their attitude toward Zaim were their resistance to the compulsory of recruitment and their bitterness at the boycott of their weapons.

The Hennawi revolution

Colonel Hennawi was the commander of the first brigade that parked in south Syria. His role in the revolution was not central, but rather technical. Behind this conspiracy was a big group of officers and politicians, including

Akram El Horani. Iraq pulled the strings, and assisted the success of the revolution.

The armoured battalion, which was commanded by Zaim, was to turn to the Druze Mountain to be a garrison there, and was transferred by Hennawi to Katna, 30 kilometers from Damascus. In August 14th 1949 the armoured battalion moved toward the capital. Small groups of soldiers turned to the points most essential for the revolution, in order to take them over and to arrest the ruling people. The role of Fadalla Abu Mansur was to arrest Zaim himself. He encircled the building and broke through inside, after the guard did not object. He found Zaim inside the house. He slapped him on his face in a symbolic manner and accused him of the crime of betrayal. Zaim was brought to an armoured car and was removed to a certain meeting point. The conspirators told Fadalla that the high command sentenced him to death and ordered him to execute the verdict. He executed him by one shot.

Hennawi's rule was short. He gave Hashem El Atasi the role of compounding the government. In this government there was no Druze minister, however ministers like Nazem El Kudsi, Akram El Horani and Mishel Aflak were popular and accepted by the Druze. In October 1949 a delegation of Druze distinguished men, headed by Sultan El Atrash and his relative Hasan, visited Damascus. They visited Hashem Atasi and pronounced the loyalty of the mountain to the existing rule.

Hennawi's period of ruling was so short; that it is hard to determine whether he was good or bad for the Druze. He made no demands for compulsory recruitment and disarmament like Zaim. A Druze governor – Aref El Nakdi, replaced the Kurdish mountain's governor that was appointed during the rule of Zaim and that made the Druze furious. However, the El Atrash family asked to replace him since he supported El Shaa'bien. The government accepted their request. Fuad Halabi replaced the governor.

The relationship building between Damascus and the traditional leadership in the Druze Mountain continued until Hennawi was, once again, overthrown, through the assistance of the Druze officers that crowned Adib Shishakly as a ruler.

Shishakly and the Druze

Shishakly, who planed the revolution against Hennawi with Akram El Horani, knew that if the Druze supported him his chance of succeeding in this revolution increases considerably.

Two days before the initiation of the Shishakly revolution Akram El Horani visited mayor Amin Abu Asef and Captain Fadlala Abu Mansur, in their camps. These two Druze officers executed Hennawi" revolution and were in charge of the first brigade's armoured forces. He turned to them and asked for their assistance in replacing the government. The two officers were convinced and promised to support, and were active in performing the revolution.

When Shishakly was a Chief of Staff he visited the Druze mountain and Sultan El Atrash, in El Karia. He made an enthusiastic speech praising Sultan, in which he said: "We have come to the crib of respect and heroism, we came to receive lessons in patriotism from the father of fight and patriotism, from the great teacher and praised leader...". When he returned to Damascus he ordered the propaganda and information services in his land to spread his speech and pictures with Sultan El Atrash in all Syrian media and in newspapers in Cairo and Beirut. When time passed and the Sultan did not pay him a visit he said to one of his assistants: "I highly recommend that Sultan will pay me a visit. His visit, after all, reinforces my international status and proves that all Syrian people like me and my rule". He invited Ameer Hasan El Atrash to find why Sultan did not pay him a visit. The Ameer scorned him and asked him to return the constitutional lives to the state. He said that the Sultan was not pleased with his policy and his false accusations against Syria's politicians.

Following his efforts to make the Druze support him he resigned in November 1951 from his office as a Chief of Staff, and appointed the Druze general Shawkat Shkair in his place. However, Shishakly changed his attitude toward the Druze when he saw that they were dissatisfied of him and acted alongside his opponents.

The Druze, who were close to the Hashemis, arouse the anger of Shishakly, who was in conflict with Iraq. Other reasons for Shishakly's hatred of the Druze were: "The Druze who love to stay in their homes are war lovers, living in the Jordan-Lebanon border area. They are democrats and dislike Shishakly. Some of their leaders, like Sultan El Atrash and Kamal Junblat, have advanced political ideas that make them figures with national importance. An alliance between the Druze and the ex political

leaders can be highly dangerous…". This, no doubt, was the reason that Shishakly decided to attack them.

The relationships between Shishakly and the Druze worsened. Shishakly made plans to hit the Druze severely, once he had the opportunity. The Druze themselves were aware of those plans and were highly active in the efforts before the revolt.

The revolt against Shishakly

Shishakly's activities after his second revolution in 1951 turned the various Syrian leaders, the right and left parties, Druze and other minorities against him. Representatives of all the above summoned in July 1953 in Hums, to sign a national treaty and commitment to act to depose the dictator. In this meeting it was agreed that the sign for the beginning of the revolt will be given in the Druze mountain. Sultan supported the convention and Hasan El Atrash actively participated.

In January 1954 revolts broke out in the Druze mountain, in a reaction to the arrest of a Druze delegation that made a visit to Damascus and included Mansur El Atrash, Sultan's son, and member of the Baa'th party. this party distributed leaflets against Shishakly in the Druze mountain . Shishakly used a quick preventive action, arrested the delegation and judged Sultan El Atrash to house arrest. The Druze demonstrated in Swida, as a protest against these arrests, and demanded Shishakly to release the detainees. Shishakly interpreted this as the first step of a long plan for his deposition. Therefore, He sent armoured units to conquer the town. Shishakly spread a plot that the Druze cooperated with Israel, and in order to strengthen and reinforce this plot he presented weapons from Israel, that according to his false story were found in the Druze Mountain.

The Druze gathered in Alkeria and the military troops sent to the mountain began to fire. The Druze reacted in riots and calls to depose Shishakly. The revolt spread to other villages in the mountain and all residents gathered against the organized and well-armed army, sent to end the revolt. Shishakly was not restrained from bombing the Druze villages and imposed a curfew on the mountain area. The army was composed of over 20000 soldiers, and according to some newspapers – many soldiers joined the revolt.

The army slaughtered the Druze inhabitants, destroyed and robbed many houses. However the Druze did not surrender nor gave up. In the same time Shishakly maintained contacts with Syrian leaders, in order to save his rule by reconciling with them. However, all his efforts failed.

In reaction to the slaughter and to the vicious acts in the mountain the Druze in Lebanon and Israel were furious. Kamal Junblat offered, at first, his mediation, but Shishakly refused. Representatives of the Druze in Lebanon gathered in Beirut in February 1954 to discuss the option of assisting their brothers attacked in Syria. In reaction, Shishakly ordered to close the border between Syria and Lebanon. In Israel the Druze followed with great concern and fear the events in the mountain. Their representatives asked the Israeli government to allow the young Druze to enter the Druze mountain, in order to assist their brothers, however the government was unable to accept this request.

In Februrary 1954 Sultan, along with some of his supporters, moved to Jordan, asking for political asylum. He said that his escape to Jordan was an attempt to prevent bloodshed and protest against the killing of the mountain inhabitants. The revolts spread throughout all Syria, except for Damascus. Shishakly proclaimed a state of emergency in the state and began to prepare to the future. In February 25th the army advanced to Halab, under the command of Captain Mustafa hamdun. He demanded Shishakly to leave Syria. On that day the Druze Colonel, Amin Abu Assaf, the commander of the third division, in Dir Zur, joined the rebels.

On that day the commanders of Ladkia, Hums and Hamat also joined. They gave Shishakly an ultimatum, commanding him to immediately leave the state. He summoned the people close to him, who advised him to resign. When he saw that the whole country was against him and that he had no chance of surviving and holding on, he sent his resignation letter to the president of the parliament and left Damascus. He moved to Beirut.

When Shishakly resigned General Shawkat Shkir released all political detainees in El Maze. Shishakly's supporters tried to make a counter-revolution, but failed. Shishakly was moved from Beirut to Saudi Arabia, and this was the end of a five-years-long military dictatorship.

Sultan El Atrash returned from Jordan, General Shkir continued to act as a Chief of staff, and it seemed that the Druze became satisfied with the deposition of the dictator and the elimination of his regime.

After Shishakly

The revolt against Shishakly was a major event in the lives of Druze in and outside Syria. Every Druze credits another victory in a series of the military victories and achievements of the Druze in the last century. The Druze' achievements following the revolt were seen in the following areas:

1. They succeeded in neutralizing and repulsing a danger threatening them and aiming at oppressing them. Shishakly fought against all separatist tendencies of the various minorities and aspired to create a unified Syria. When he failed to achieve the support of the Druze he aspired to break their spirit and to exterminate them as a political power.
2. The increase of their influence and strength in the internal arena after the army became an important factor in the political lives. After Shishakly's defeat the parliamentary lives prevailed in Syria, and in such condition the Druze do not have strong influence, but on the other hand, the army stayed an active factor in the political lives. The Druze chief of Staff, Shawkat Shkir, continued his role even after the deposition of the dictator. In almost all governments after the deposition of Shishakly there was at least one Druze minister. In this period some Druze officers were highly salient. The Syrian prime minister, Said El Gazi, appointed General Shkir in June 1954 as the minister of defence, in order to assure the support of the army in the government and in order to satisfy the Druze' will.
3. The victory over Shishakly made the Druze one of the strongest forces, in the arena of internal struggle, that each rule or ruler had to consider.
4. The revolt led to the reunification of all Syrian members of the Druze community around the traditional leadership of Sultan El Atrash, after the internal conflict in 1947. There is no doubt that the Druze' strength is in their unification and stability and a firm capacity to face every internal or external enemy. The 1947 conflict and the struggle against the wealthy families weakened to a large extent their influence, willingness and ability to protect their very existence. This state was highly desirable for the leaders of Damascus, who also operated for enhancing the internal conflicts between Druze. However, the Druze reunified, as a result of Shishakly's aggressiveness.

Two years of unstable parliamentary lives in Syria passed. During those two years the Druze were not too active, however they were, once again, under the spot light, when the 1956 conspiracy was revealed.

The 1956 conspiracy

The Druze' revolt against Shishakly was the last time they appeared in the Syrian political arena as one strong and united group. During the period following the revolt they split to many groups, with various aims and opposite interests. This was caused by the decline in the influence the traditional leadership had on them, and the rise of Druze officers in the Syrian army, which gave them the opportunity to become leaders, even though they were not members of big families. During the difficult times of the revolt all the Druze unified around Sultan El Atrash, even though many of them saw him no longer as an absolute leader. However, when the danger passed, new leaders, members of different families, appeared in the image of military officers. From now on, Druze were part of various parties, struggled and fought for opposite goals, supported different men and ideologies and fought for personal interests and power positions in institutions.

The conspirators were interested in accepting Druze leaders to their ranks from the following reasons:

1. The Druze were known as a revolutionary and agitated element that had already proved itself in several previous revolutions that succeeded. The participation of the Druze people in conspiracies enhanced its chances for success.
2. The Druze were responsible for attracting and bringing military forces to the mountain, by revolting, and to distract the minds of people from the central events about to take place in Damascus.
3. By receiving the Druze' support of the conspiracy it is easier for the conspirators to receive weapons from Iraq, both geographically and regarding the good relations of that time, between the Druze and the Hashemites in Iraq.

   The rebels succeeded in recruiting Druze leaders as Ameer Hasan, Fadalla Abu Mansur and the parliamentary envoy, Fadalla Jarbua.

Evantually, the revolt failed, due to the wide range of opinions, interests and outlooks that prevailed, due to the alertness of the Syrian

intelligence Commander, and after the discovery of guns among the mountain Druze, smuggled from Iraq. The result was disarmament of the Druze mountain, the bringing of the leaders that participated in the conspiracy to justice and the attitude of the government toward the Druze became suspicious.

Unification with the Egyptians

There is no evidence for the participation of any Druze element or their support of the talks between Syrians and Egyptians regarding the unification between the two states. Following this policy, the Druze were not too enthusiastic about this unification, immediately after its construction.

Despite this, there was a great closeness between the Egyptian rulers, especially Nasser and Amer, and the Druze leadership in the mountain, both senior and junior. The newspapers of this time point on a long line of initiatives and developing enterprises in the mountain, during unification. Such enterprises and works, such as electricity, water networks, water reservoirs, road paving and the construction of various industries – highly impressed the farmers and village people, used to cultivating their lands in old fashioned and primitive ways. Behind these enterprises was an honest goal, nevertheless there was also a political interest of improving the standard of living among the Druze, through improving agriculture and developing new sources of maintenance. The Syrian governor, Abdul Hakim Amer, made many visits to the mountain and maintained good relationships with leaders. He constructed a monument in the mountain, in memory of the Druze soldiers who were killed in the 1925 revolt, and by this he meant to express his gratitude for the big contribution of the Druze to the Syrian independence and to the Arab nationality. Nasser also visited Syria in 25/2/1961 and visited Sultan, and the press is filled with descriptions of the high enthusiasm by which he was accepted by the people. Nasser made a big gesture for Sultan by leaving his honour title "Pasha", despite the fact that he completely cancelled it in Egypt and Syria.

After unification

Syria returned to its condition before unification. The struggle between the religious and political forces over the rule even enhanced, and the military entered the political arena as an important element. When the revolution broke out, Sultan El Atrash proclaimed his support of it, however by posing three conditions:

1. That Shishakly will not return. This fear resulted from the appointment of Mamun El Kuzbari as a Prime Minister.
2. The commander of the army will be a Druze.
3. He did not agree to be pressed and pushed to denunciate and condemn Nasser.

The three conditions of Sultan were kept, and the Druze Chief of Staff appointed was General Abdul Karim Zaher El Din. In April 1962 he was appointed the High Commander of the Syrian army and decided to be in charge of the defence ministry in the government. In January of that year he appointed himself a Marshal (Farik). Zaher El Din was no brilliant person, and had no politician's traits and skills, therefore he did not intervene much in the political lives and did not succeed in influencing to an extent expected from a man in his position and status.

During the rule of the moderate section of the Baa'th, between the March 8th 1963 revolution and the 1966 revolution the Druze enjoyed control and influence in governmental and military circles. There were many senior officers in the military, such as Brigadier General Fahed El Shae'r, the commander of the forces in Yarmuk area, and Brigadier General Jamal Kanj, commander of the forces in Jezira area, Colonel Hamed A'bid, the commander of the national guard, Salim Hatum, and others. Also, in the Amin Hafez' government, which was assembled in November 1963, three Druze ministers were appointed, for the first time: Mansur El Atrash, Sultan's son and member of the Baa'th party from its beginning was appointed Minister of labour and support; Ahmed Abu Saleh, the Minister of transport, and Shebli El Isami, Minister of culture and national instruction.

Cultural, social and economical lives

In Syria lives the definitive majority of Druze and they are concentrated in the Druze Mountain and in the big cities. In the Druze Mountain they live in 132 villages and a number of towns, the mountain's capital is the town Sweida. There is no urban Druze settlements, but many Druze live in the big Syrian cities. The geographical conditions under which the Druze live gave them political and military advantages:

1. In the Druze Mountain they comprise 90 percent of the population, the rest are Bedouins and nomads. This majority gives them total and complete hegemony in the mountain area, and in the 20^{th} century fighting conditions this hegemony is highly important militarily, considering the mountain's topographic conditions.
2. The Druze concentration in Syria has also branches in Lebanon and Israel. This fact gives them a sense of security and might. These settlements were always prepared and willing to assist the inhabitants of the mountain.
3. The Druze Mountain is located on the desert border and it was always an option for them to find secure shelter in the desert.
4. Due to their proximity to Damascus, they posed a serious threat to every central government.
5. The Druze Mountain is a separate geographical unit. It is isolated and non permeable and the Druze knew how to utilize these advantages for their own good.

The Druze lived in villages with high correlation among them. Socially they are divided to families. Some families are big and include over 1000 people, and they populate number of villages. Some are a definite majority in the village and are the leaders in that village. Until the French mandate a small number of families ruled the majority of population in a kind of a feudal way. The El Atrash family headed them, and in each village there was one paternal home that owned a quarter of the land of the village, and also collected taxes, employed farmers and acted as if the population was his own private estate. >From the big families there were appointments of the village Mukhtar, the Imam (religious man), the teacher and all other professionals. These people were not more qualified or more educated than others, but only had a family advantage, that is: their familial origin and strength enabled them to be appointed to the key roles and jobs. The farmers and the simple people willingly received this way of life since they were not

familiar with any other way of life and because it gave them protection from external danger, including the danger of the central rule. Only rarely did revolts against the despotism of the ruling families arise, and the most famous of these were the national revolts in 1877 and the El Sha'abiun movement in 1947. This way of life was broken a little during the French mandate. This period was characterized by certain mobility inside the Druze society. Pupils moved to Damascus and Beirut for their studies, students were sent to Europe and many of the youths recruited to the army.

The Frenchmen also found cooperators and encouraged them to throw off the yoke of the ruling families. After receiving independence the standard of living, as well as the level of education, increased, there was an improvement in agriculture and in cultivation of the land, the connections with the cities strengthened and there was an increase in the number of recruiters to the army, so the previous conditions make it impossible for the big families to control the population as before. After the revolt against Shishakly a young leadership arouse, made up from military officers and Universities graduates.

In the last 50 years there was an increase in emigration from the Druze villages. This emigration is divided to two types: external and internal. The internal emigration is inside Syria and Lebanon. Many youths abandon their villages and move to the big cities in order to make a living. Many of the youths that recruited to the army and attained high ranks, and students, after they got used to the city lives, found it difficult to return to the village and to the traditional way of life. There is disproportion between the slow advancement of the village and the quick and high personal progress of the young person who left his village. These young people settle in the cities, but maintain tight relationships with the family left in the village.

The external emigration began in the end of the 19^{th} century, with the emigration of members of other religions, especially Christians, to the Latin American and African states. Those people, who travelled in the big world, seeking their fortune, usually went to the United States, Brazil, Venezuela, Argentina and several African states. In these states there are, today, big concentrations of Druze emigrants maintaining good relations among themselves, but poor connections with their families in Syria. Many of them became rich and sometimes sent money to the mountain people.

There is also an external-internal emigration, when someone immigrates to the overseas states, lives there, establishes himself and becomes rich. After several years he becomes homesick and misses his

family, or country of origin, or decides, from whatever reasons, that it is best for him to return to his country. He returns, but not to his village and the mountain area, but rather settles in Damascus or some other city. This whole process of emigration severely affects the community and its rate of progress, since it causes the flight of the best men and forces, who could have highly contributed to the progress and development of the village.

The Druze and the army

The absorption of young Druze in the Syrian army and the role the army plays in the Syrian politics today were one of the main causes for the increase, both in honour and in strength, of the Druze in the state. The army was an attraction for many young Druze, and the political circumstances made it easier for them to be accepted.

This can be explained by the following reasons:

1. The Druze are excellent warriors. They have tradition, experience and high prestige. The wars they managed against the armies of the Ottoman Empire, Ibrahim Pasha and the French, made them brave and fighting people. The Druze youths hear stories about the heroism of their predecessors, and this give them the incentive and inspiration to imitate them.
2. The French encouraged more minorities than members of the majority Sunnis to recruit the army.
3. During the French mandate it was possible to be released from the army by paying a ransom of 500 Syrian Liras. The Sunnis were able to pay this ransom, but the minorities were not, and therefore they had to be recruited. Druze or Alawi youths, when finished high school, were unable to be accepted to the Universities, because of their financial position, and they had an option of being accepted to external military academy.
4. The internal social structure of the community encouraged undistinguished and non-wealthy families to reach a certain status inside the community through the army, by pursuing military career and promotion. If we look at the names of the distinguished Druze officers we will see that only few of them were members of the well-known families.

5. The Druze always lived and operated inside a hostile environment, which saw them as dissidents and traitors. Throughout the 19th century, and the French mandate, they were able to get away from them and to seclude themselves. However, when they received independence and alongside the improvement of communications, they have no choice but to integrate and to live with them. Therefore, they were attracted to the army, in order to pursue powerful positions and to defend their status as a community.

Chapter Six

The Druze in Lebanon today

World War One was a bad and difficult war, which burdened all countries involved. Lebanon itself severely suffered from the war. The hunger in the area also hit Lebanon. The Ottomans, and especially the governor, Jamal Pasha, acted cruelly toward the population and many were blamed in false accusations. They arrested leaders, deported or executed them. In the beginning of the war Jamal Pasha gave the Druze population in Lebanon a special treatment, because of their military glory, and since he believed that the Druze were capable of recruiting a big and qualified military force, which will assist the Ottoman authorities in war. He based his optimism on the fact that in Lebanon the Ottomans had friends amongst the big Druze families, like Arslan and Junblat, but the majority despised and detested the defiled rule.

The war itself did not arrive to Lebanon, but the inhabitants suffered from its results. The tourists, who were an import source of income, did not arrive, the basic food disappeared from the market, the Ottomans cut the trees and forests and affected agriculture. They banned the cattle of the inhabitants, as well as any other useful thing. The Ottoman soldiers and commanders occupied houses and acted in a barbarian manner and life got much worse. In addition to all that, the whole population suffered from a severe locust plague, which caused severe hunger.

The inhabitants of Lebanon survived the war and hoped, as well as all residents of Syria, to the fulfilment of the promises given to them and to the other countries in the region by England and France, to endow independence to the Arab states. The majority of inhabitants were glad to get rid of the Ottomans and hoped for a new future and a different world.

However, they very quickly found out that they replaced one evil with another. Lebanon and Syria were under a French mandate. Such an arrangement left no options to the population. They had to suffer and struggle. The authorities of the French mandate decided to divide Syria into several states, including the Druze mountain state. The Druze residents of Lebanon knew that such state has no right to exist, and that it won't last because the Druze people, due to their small numbers, are incapable of keeping and maintaining an independent state. They also wished to stay in a unified state, with their old neighbours. The Druze people were, in the past, the rulers of Lebanon, for centuries, and they wished to keep ruling the entire country. The French mandate, however, had other plans, not in favour of the Druze community. The Druze in Lebanon did not revolt, like their brothers in Syria, but hundreds of Druze warriors from the Shuff mountains, from south Lebanon and from other parts of the Lebanese entity participated in the Druze revolt in Syria, including famous leaders as Rashid Taleea, Adel Arslan, Fuad Hamza and others, some of whom sacrificed their lives for this noble goal.

The authorities of the French mandate preferred the Maronites and the other Christians in Lebanon. A constitution was accepted in 1926, which assured a balance between all communities, in the daily treatment and in the relations between the rulers. The subordinates preferred by much the Christian camp to the other camp, which included the Muslim communities. According to the law a Maronite president, a Sunni Prime Minister and a Druze defence minister were appointed. Elections were held, according to the constitution, and a government with Druze delegates was appointed. This arrangement was kept until 1943, when a new government was established. This government declared, in October 1943, Lebanon's independence. The French supreme commissioner arrested the president, the Prime Minister and ministers, and imprisoned them in an ancient fortress in the town Rashaia, in the Lebanonese valley. The Druze leader, Ameer Majid Arslan, the chairman of the Shiite parliament, Hamada, and the Christian minister Habib Abu Shahla remained free. The three leaders summoned the parliament and declared the establishment of a new government. They cancelled the mandatory Lebanese flag and replaced it in a new one. They moved to the Druze village Bshamun, in the Shuff mountains, where Majid Arselan raised the new flag and declared the independence of Lebanon. Many Lebanese, who longed for independence, supported this move. Thousands of people arrived to the village to identify with the rebelling leaders. The Druze organized and established a military force of over 300

soldiers, whose aim was to protect the village if attacked. The French authorities tried to attack the village and the rebels in it, however they were defeated. The enthusiasm this move awoke in Lebanon caused the French authorities to give up. They recognized the last steps made, released those arrested and de-facto accepted the independence of Lebanon. The official independence declaration was made in 1946, and then the French soldiers left Lebanon.

The Druze in Lebanon, just like their brothers in Syria, were an important factor in achieving independence. They were supposed to enjoy this victory, and hoped that the government will treat the Druze population kindly, and assign them positions and jobs. They aspired to be involved in determining the country's fate. They assisted in rehabilitation, recruited to the army and did all they could to establish the state and to advance it. The Druze waited for years and asked nothing for themselves... but, with time they began to warn about the injustice caused to the underprivileged and deprived Druze citizens. Druze ministers were appointed, senior Druze clerks were appointed, and yet, the discrimination was clearly felt. In this period the constant, eternal problem of the Druze community in Syria, Lebanon and Israel was most salient: their numerical strength. In a regime that holds elections the Druze community receives its rights and services to which it is entitled according to its numerical strength. However, in all these states they contributed to the state relatively much more than their numerical strength, since their specific weight was always big and their sacrifice in the national issues was very high. Therefore, they felt that they were entitled to more. In all countries the Druze invested huge amounts and made many sacrifices until they achieved independence. Everybody looked for them and needed them for a certain aim, and once this aim is achieved – they tended to forget about them and even to connive against them. This was most severe in Lebanon, where the Druze were the masters of Lebanon and had ruled there for centuries. Their historical memories were very long and every site in Lebanon reminded them of an important part in their history. In this un-encouraging situation a young educated man entered the Lebanese politics: Kamal Junblat. He immediately comprehended and realized the problematic nature of the difficult lives in Lebanon. He found a solution in his own way and according to the general national mood. Junblat established, in 1949, the progressive socialist party, not as a Druze institution, but rather as a multi-communal secular institution, which operated for the benefit of the total population and tried to assist all people. In the head of the party were non Druze people, whose opinions were given

heavy weight, and the party was led by the establisher himself, Kamal Junblat, for about 30 years. This party highly successful in Lebanon and in the Arab world, was involved with, and attached to the stormy political lives of Lebanon. The leader Junblat was offered to be a minister in most governments in Lebanon. He was one of the most distinguished and salient leaders of Lebanon, and he obtained many achievements for both Druze and non-Druze supporters.

Junblat also had high influence as an opposition. In 1952 Junblat declared a fight against the president, Bshara El Huri. He accused him of corruption and demanded his resignation. The president refused, and then Junblat declared a total strike in the state, on behalf of the entire opposition. The strike was total all around Lebanon, was highly successful and eventually led to the president's resignation. A similar event was in 1958, when the opposition, under the leadership of Junblat, asked for the resignation of the president, claiming that he acted against the interests of Lebanon when associating with the Americans. This struggle soon turned into an unconcealed military revolt, in which the rebels fought against the Lebanese army. The president asked for the assistance of the Americans. They sent marines forces that fought alongside the government, and only through this were they able to ensure the ending of revolt. On the other hand, the president Shimon had to resign, and he was replaced by the General Fuad Shaab. All communities in Lebanon, including the Druze, accepted the new president. In his time the Druze community was highly represented in the government, however, behind the curtain internal and foreign forces existed, and these eventually caused the outburst of the civilian war in Lebanon, in 1975.

The Druze community in Lebanon was divided into two factions, and this split caused many severe disasters. This was the split between the Yazbek and Junblat families, whose origin was an ancient dispute in the Arab peninsula. Ameer Majid Arselan and his supporters led the right Yazbekian camp and supported the government and the existing arrangement. In contrast, Kamal Junblat and his party supported the left faction, which, during the Seventies, supported the Palestinian forces that operated in Lebanon in that time. Lebanon of the Seventies was split between Christians and Muslims. The number of Muslims increased considerably in the last fifty years. The last census was held in Lebanon in 1932. It showed a Christian majority, and according to it the key positions in the constitution were determined. Ever since, the Christians refused to hold a new census, and the Muslims constantly demanded this. The Palestinian

problem sharpened and exacerbated the dispute. Junblat and his party completely identified with the Palestinians. He paid with his life. Assailants ambushed him on his way from the Shouf mountains to Beirut, assassinated him and killed him and two of his men. This was in March 1977, two years after the civil war had burst in Lebanon. Until than the Druze did not participate in war, but when their leader died the attitudes became sharper and the rift was clear. When Israel conquered Lebanon, in coordination with the Maronites and the Falangists, in 1982, it led to the removal of the Palestinians from Lebanon and made the internal dispute worse. The Druze did not intervene in this case. However the Falangists tried, in the shadow of the Israeli occupation, and seemingly with the support and encouragement of Israel, to remove the Druze from the Shouf Mountains and from Lebanon. Then all Druze gathered and released the Shouf Mountains from every Christian presence or influence. The Druze warriors held strong and mighty fights, and the distinguished Sheikhs headed them, and they fought like young soldiers. The Druze, who overcame the threat of banishment, would not leave their houses, under no circumstances. The Falangists believed that they would be able to mislead Israel for a long time, but the Israelis understood very quickly that it was a big mistake to rely upon the Maronites. The results of this mistake still exist, 18 years after the beginning of the Lebanon war. The Druze suffered severe lost and damages, but they began to rehabilitate themselves and reconstruct all that was ruined. At first a kind of a Druze canton was established, when Lebanon was divided to separate regions, however the moment the war ended, in the beginning of the Nineties, the Druze continued to maintain their traditional attitudes and immediately integrated in the lives of the state as they were before the war began.

There is no doubt that the war caused severe damages to the Druze regarding their status and influence in the country. Once again, there is a decline in their strength and ability to influence. Today they are a small community, which with time lost its political assets and is dependent upon the benevolence of others. The Druze are managing well and dominate the regions in which they live, but their general strength has been largely reduced, although they still have not said "the last word".

Chapter Seven

The Druze in Israel

The Druze people were partners in the construction of the state of Israel in that they contributed to the establishment of the state. In the beginning of the Thirties the first contacts between Druze leaders from Usfia and Jewish representatives from the neighbouring settlement Yagur were established. Similar contacts were established between people from the villages Maghar and Rama and Jewish leaders from the Galilee. During these contacts the idea of collaboration between the two parties, mutual assistance and economic connections in the area of agricultural growth - began to materialize. During this period there were no more than several thousand Druze inhabitants in Palestine. They suffered from pressures, persecutions, attacks and often plotting and scheming by hostile factors in the Arab community in Palestine. Those who participated in the great Arab revolt, which burst in 1936, burdened their hands upon the small Druze people, who were weak and helpless. The rebels have plundered the Druze villages, killed people, attacked women and destroyed agricultural corps. The Druze in Palestine sent expeditions to Lebanon and to the Druze mountain in order to ask for the assistance of the Druze leaders there. Sultan El Atrash and Ameer Majid Arselan asked for the intervention of the Palestinian Mufti, in order to cease these attacks. The attacks of the Druze villages took place, despite the fact that hundreds of Druze youths have voluntarily recruited to the Arab rebels. During this time another problem evolved, which made the relations between the small Druze community and the large Muslim majority more spoiled and turbid. The Druze saw the grave of Jethro as a holy Druze site for centuries. They used to visit the site, to make their vows there, to pray, to perform circumcision or engagement ceremonies, and to be blessed with the site's sainthood. In 1882 the Druze spiritual leaders had

collected money and contributions from the Druze in Israel and abroad, renovated the structure and perceived it as the most sacred site for them. In the middle of the Thirties the authorities of the Muslim consecrations decided to take over the Jethro site and to supervise the visits of the Druze people there, and to necessitate them to make various payments and taxes and to hold their visits only on certain occasions and times and under certain restrictions. A delegation on behalf of the spiritual authority went to Jerusalem and met the Mufti, however no reasonable and sufficient answer was offered. Delegates were sent, once more, to ask for external intervention, however this did not help. Eventually the Tiberias court was asked to demand to accept the holy site as a Druze praying site managed by the Druze authorities. This suit was not discussed quickly and there was no decision made, and this lasted until the establishment of the state.

During Second World War Lebanon was conquered by the Vichy forces, supported by the Nazis. The Druze in Palestine decided to protect themselves. Several leaders and youths gathered and decided to establish a Druze military unit, to assist the British forces against the Germans and their French allies who still ruled in Syria and Lebanon, through the mandate. The Sheikhs Marzuk Maadi, Ali Melhem from Yarka village, the officer Yousef Alli from Pkiin, Farhan Tareeff (the father of minister and member of parliament Saleh Tareeff) from Julis, and others, were some of the initiators of the establishment of the unit. They recruited about 400 youths, members of the community. The assignments and chores that this unit had to perform were to keep and protect the northern border of Palestine from attacks of the Vichy's forces from Lebanon, to maintain the public order in north Palestine, including the Druze villages, and to prevent any attempt to disturb or scheme aimed at the Druze inhabitants. This Druze unit succeeded and became an important factor in the lives of community. Some of its soldiers were sent to fight in Egypt and North Africa. This unit continued to exist after the Second World War was over, and was the kernel of the Druze unit established in the I.D.F (Israel Defence force) after the state was established.

When the war of 1948 began, Arab armies attacked the Jewish units and forces in Israel. The Druze in Syria and Lebanon feared from the destiny of their brothers in Israel and wished to assist them, no matter the cost, and to save them from deportation, extermination or any other danger. Therefore, in the Druze Mountain in Syria and in Lebanon a battalion of volunteers was recruited, whose aim was to protect Palestinian's Druze from any possible danger. The battalion arrived at Palestine under the leadership

of the old military commander Shakeeb Wahab from Lebanon. The battalion parked near Shefaram and was coordinated with the leadership of the Arab forces in Israel. A fight was held between the battalion and the Hagana forces near the settlement Ramat Yohanan. In this bloody fight the brother of Moshe Dayan, as well as many others, was killed. The leaders of the Jewish settlement and the Hagana asked for the immediate intervention of local Druze people in order to regulate the relationship between the battalion and the Jewish majority in Israel. They asked to stop the fighting because of the many losts they suffered. The heads of the Druze community in Israel, and its leaders, met the battalion's commanders and explained to them that if their aim is to assist the Druze people in Israel and to protect them from the Jews – there is no such problem, and the Druze are facing no danger from the Jews. The commanders of the battalion were convinced that the Druze in Israel faced no danger by the Jews, and therefore decided to dismantle the battalion and to return to their houses in Syria and Lebanon. They also offered each soldier or commander in the battalion the opportunity to decide about his own destiny. Many soldiers and officers, including the commander, decided that they had completed their mission since there is no danger to the Druze people in Israel. Therefore, they left Israel and returned to their homes in Syria and Lebanon. Some of them, however, preferred to stay in Israel. They scattered in the Druze villages in the Galilee and in the Carmel, bought themselves lands or houses, married local wives and settled in Israel. They associated with the members of the Druze unit established by the British during the mandate and established the Druze unit in the I.D.F, whose base was volunteering youths. In 1956 the Israeli government decided to apply compulsory recruitment law upon the young Druze and Circassians. Ever since, all youths in the age of recruitment are recruited and serve in the Druze unit and in the boarder guard. During the Seventies more Druze soldiers wished to make their military service in all I.D.F branches. Slowly and gradually various units were opened to the soldiers. Druze soldiers advanced in the military command route and reached high ranks. The highest rank reached by Druze officers is the military rank of General.

The Druze soldiers participated in all wars and in some of the military activities, and some of them paid with their lives. The number of Druze casualties was 270. They were, at first, buried in a central military cemetery, established in Usfia. However, when the number of casualties grew bigger, military cemeteries were constructed in additional areas in the Galilee, such as Bait Jan and Hurfaish. Among the bereaved parents were

the parliament member Amal Nasser El Din, whose son, sergeant major Lutfi, died in a chase after terrorists in the area of the Dead Sea in 1969. Amal was chosen by other bereaved parents to be the representative of the Druze parents in the sons-memorial organization. He initiated the establishment of this organization in the biggest Druze village, Daliat El Carmel, inside a famous house: the house of Lawrence Olyphant, whose secretary, Imber, composed the national hymn, "Hatikva".

The military aspect was supposed to give the Druze in Israel a foundation for bigger equality, involvement and influence in Israel. The Druze gave Israel whatever a state can demand from its citizens. They recruited to the army, they paid their taxes on time and on a regular basis, they identified with the state in its difficult hours, however they were neglected, and treated in contempt and disinterest by the various governmental authorities. The government tended and treated the Druze people through its Arab departments in the various offices. These departments employed Arabic speaking Jewish clerks, whose origin was the Islam states, and who were brought to Israel after they had to give up their assets and property there, and high positions, since they were intelligent and were considered good working force. In Israel these clerks suffered from discrimination by the European-Jews public who ruled the state. Those clerks, Egyptians, Iraqis, Moroccans, Yemenites and Kurdish – treated the Arab population, including the Druze population, in an arrogant, humiliating and provocative manner, as a revenge for the way in which they were treated by the European-originated Jews' establishment. In the first 20 years after the state was established the villages of Druze and Arabs were under a military regime. A Druze soldier could have travelled through the whole country as a soldier, but if he wished to leave his village to visit the grave of Jethro with his parents, he had to achieve a licence from the military governor. Bitterness accompanied the Druze citizens for many years. In the middle of the Seventies the Druze leaders demanded from the authorities to exclude the Arab department from treating them, since in the meantime Arab clerks were appointed in the Arab departments, and they mistreated the Druze population, from various reasons. The government agreed, and began to directly treat this issue. This change, however, caused no change or improvement. There is still discrimination, neglect and contempt, and there is still a wide gap between what is imparted to the Druze citizen and what is imparted to the Jew citizen. It might be that some of the blame is in the Druze leadership itself, which focussed on its own interests and issues instead of taking care of the whole population.

The Druze leadership in the first years after the state was established was composed of the Druze spiritual authority, the parliament members, the heads of local councils and officers. In 1951 local councils were established in Daliat El Carmel and Usfia. With time, and in the next 30 years, councils were established in the other villages. The Druze were also active in elections to the parliament. Since the first *Knesset* (Israeli parliament) they had representatives, chosen by Arab lists, related to the ruling party, *Mapai* (Israel Labour party). The first parliament members were the Sheikhs saleh Khnafes, Jaber Muadi, Labeeb Abu Ruken and Amal Nasr El Din. Until now ten Druze citizens were chosen to the Israeli parliament under the ruling of the Labour Party, the Likud (uniting) party, the communist party and *shinuy* (change) party. The number of Druze within the Israeli society is almost 1.5 percents of the total population, which means that they are entitled to be represented in the parliament by two members. Usually there are two Druze members of parliament.

The Druze people in Israel live in 18 villages: two of them are in the Carmel and the rest in the Galilee. Some of the villages are only occupied by Druze people, such as Beit Jan, Yarcha, Yanuh, etc. Druze are minority in Shefaram, Kefar Yasif, Rama and Abu Snan. In the last few years there are also Druze civilians living in cities as Eilat, Haifa, Beer Sheva, Acre, Jerusalem, etc, because of their work and occupations. Usually every Druze family living in a city has an additional house in the village, to which it returns in weekends or on retirement. The inhabitants succeeded in building themselves and their children modern houses in the villages of their own and with no need of mortgages or governmental assistance. Only in the last few years did the mortgage banks attract the Druze people and opened branches in the Druze villages, and then the Druze citizens began to receive loans, whether needed or not. The local councils succeeded, in the late Sixties, to connect the villages to water, electricity and phone networks. And still, 50 years after the establishment of Israel, there are villages in which there is no connection to the sewage network or no industrial area.

The Druze's main practice was agriculture. During the sixties there was a tendency in all Arab settlements in Israel, including in the Druze settlements, to neglect agriculture in favour of construction, manufacturing in the neighbouring towns, soil works, etc. In that time there was a tendency, in the Druze villages, according to which many youths were employed by the military forces, police, and prison services, in addition to general clerical work.

The Druze have advanced considerably on their own politically and socially. They are still lagging behind in their education. Schools were opened in all Druze villages throughout the first 20 years after the state was established, however the level was not high. Religious figures opposed the education of the girls and not many turned to high education. Until the establishment of the state there were only two Druze people that graduated from the university. In the Fifties there were two others, in the Sixties additional five and only during the Seventies there was a wide increase in the number of students and graduates. However, the figures are still small and far from the national average of minorities, not to mention the Israeli average.

Regarding the organization of the community – there was a significant activity, fed by political interests of the state's authorities. After the compulsory recruitment law was applied on the Druze community, in 1956, the state recognized and accepted in 1957 the Druze community as a separate community, which has a right to establish its own justice institutions regarding personal status, as well as the right to organize communal institutions to itself. Then the Druze communal courts were established and judges were appointed. The state accepted the three traditional religious leaders: the Sheiks Amin Tariff, Muhammad Maadi and Abdalla Khir, as an inherited spiritual authority.

The Druze citizens did not operate as a collective with super goals, but rather as individuals, where each aspires to base himself economically, to take care of his children, to try to get them the best education and the best future possible. The Druze people were members of all parties. There was no use in organizing a Druze party because of the small number of voters and because it was impossible to assure that they will all vote for the same party. The Druze were even members of the religious Jewish parties, since voting, not only in the Druze sector, is according to interests rather than principles. The political involvement of the Druze citizens, especially during the eighties and nineties, led to an increase in their openness and attentiveness for issues of national, communal or religious identity. The Druze community is, nationally, culturally and linguistically, part of the Arab nation, and the only difference between it and the other components of the Arab nation is the Druze faith. Many Druze youths argued about the various emphases on this issue. The argument was between youths who established the Druze Zionist movement and other youths, who joined the communist party. They were both minorities, and the majority was somewhere in the middle and was part of the centre movements.

The military service assisted the Druze as a community in two important and critical situations: the first was during the Six Days War, when Israel conquered the Syrian Height. The Israeli forces enabled the Druze residents of the Height to stay in their villages and houses. The rest left. The second occasion was when the Lebanon War burst in 1982, and Israel associated with the Maronites in Lebanon. After a while it was found out that the Maronites are incapable of fulfilling the promises they made to Israel. On the contrary, they involved the Israelis in terrible acts, like the massacre in Sabra and Shatila. The Maronites felt quite strong at that time and began to perform, under the patronage of the Israeli army, a policy of elimination of the Druze entity in Lebanon. The Druze there opposed and fought. The Druze in Israel felt the big deception and the danger that their brothers there faced. They organized and recruited the Israeli public opinion, and caused a change in policy.

In the first 50 years the communal issues were managed by the spiritual authority and later by the forum of the local Druze heads of councils. This forum has consolidated and strengthened in the middle of the Eighties and became the most important factor in managing the secular communal lives and their connections with the establishment. This forum declared several general strikes in the Druze villages and organized protests in Jerusalem, near the Prime Minister's office and demonstrations that were sometimes very stormy and furious. Through these means they achieved the response to some of the demands posed by the population.

In the late Nineties several youths organized and began to plan and to implement the establishment of institutions vital for the community in the areas of education, knowledge and support. For example: Mr. Asaad Araide, the head of the local council Majar, initiated, with his friend, Ibrahim Barashi, the head of the project for qualifying the children of Israel, and in full collaboration and coordination with Mr. Mufid Amer, the head of the Hurfaish council and the head of the Druze councils forum, the establishment of the village of Druze children in Hurfeish, the Druze orphanage, which is an educational and supportive shelter for Druze youths from all villages, who had experienced suffering. The institution worked for two years now. It is very successful and highly appreciated among the Druze residents whom, through their entire lives, aspired and hoped for such institutions.

Another institution that is being established in Daliat El Carmel is a Druze University. The initiator of this project was Akram Hason, the deputy of the head of local council Daliat El Carmel. He, and several others,

established the external connections and associations that initiated cultural exchange between similar circles and bodies in states like Germany, Russia, Belgium, England, etc. As a result of this activity good connections were made with the University of Lincolnshire and Humberside in England, who decided to open a branch of the university in Dalia, under the management of Akram Hasson. The studies in this branch were very successful. Thousands of students have registered to the university, finished it successfully and were given diplomas. Connections were made with European institutions in order to support the establishment of a Druze university in Daliat El Carmel. These European institutions assigned large sums for the establishment of the university. This sum enabled the acquisition of a piece of land in the eastern exit of the village, construction plans were made, the adequate approvals were achieved, and the construction now begins and is scheduled to be completed by the year 2002. The uniqueness of the university will be in teaching those professions and subjects that are relevant to and required for the Druze society in Israel. In addition, there are plans to open a Druze studies department, for the first time, and the purpose is to qualify specialists of the Druze lives and culture in all its various aspects and areas of life. For this purpose a Druze research institute will be established, as well as a library and an archive, which will concentrate all documents scattered in the houses of the Druze, as well as all books and essays written about the Druze community, in all languages and from all states. This institute will initiate researches about the Druze, publish relevant books and encourage the arrangement of sessions and discussions.

The success of these institutions encourages similar organizations in the various villages, in order to establish similar institutions, like a Druze museum in the Galilee, a college for qualifying Druze religious men established near the grave of prophet Jethro in Hitin, etc.

Chapter Eight

Druze in Diaspora

Today Druze people live in many countries around the world. In Syria, Lebanon, Israel and Jordan they have lived ever since the Druze religion was established. During the last century they arrived to other states as individual groups of immigrants, rather than organized groups. In some countries they established well-organized communities, their own organizations and well established social lives. The Druze immigration was part of a pan-Syrian or Lebanese immigration, especially to the Western states. There were many reasons for the immigration, and the main one was to escape from the Ottoman Empire, in which there were oppression and persecution of all citizens within all states of the Empire. Many could not stand the burden of taxes, the poverty and the oppression by the local governors, who did not respect humans' rights and did not take into account religious or other feelings. There were also clashes and frictions between the various communities, under a cover support and encouragement by the Ottoman authorities. To this we add the ignorance and backwardness of the population, and the lack of hope for a better future in that area. Many of the immigrants, Druze and others, were intellectuals who dreamt of freedom of speech and expression, and a better climate for living and expressing oneself. The presence of consuls and travellers and foreign representatives among the local populations within the Ottoman Empire encouraged many in the conservative local Arab society to look at overseas countries and to dream of better lives there. Newspapers published in the West arrived in the East and told of a different standard of living in the West, which caused envy and jealousy and the wish to be part of it and to aspire for it.

There are evidences of individuals that were sent, or arrived on their own, to the West. The first was Ismail Junblat, the son of Sheikh Bashir Junblat, the great leader of the Druze community in Lebanon in the

beginning of the 19th century. During this period there were attempts for cooperation between the British authorities and the Druze, against the alliance between the French and Maronites. It was then agreed by the British consul in Beirut and Sheikh Bashir Junblat to send the son to England, as a pioneer, followed later by others, in order to reinforce and tighten the alliance between the two factors. Ismail went to England in 1842, accompanied by hopes of youths of his age, for a better future. He went to London, the ideal of millions of youths living under the worldwide rule of the British Empire. For some reason the English Capital did not welcome the young man, or maybe he failed to acclimatize and settle there. He returned to Lebanon after a while, and was not followed by others. During this period some intellectuals went to Cairo, the capital of Egypt, and worked there as journalists, teachers, doctors, or other professions. In the end of the 10th century another famous and distinguished man went to Paris: Ameer Amin Arslan. His intention was to establish a newspaper there, which could enjoy the freedom of expression prevalent there. In the same time the first Druze began to immigrate to the western countries, searching a better life. Most of the immigrants intended to reach a certain place, settle there for a period of time, make money and then, as quickly as possible, to return to their countries. Only a few intended to stay there permanently, however, due to the circumstances they had to stay more than they intended. This is the place to point out that the immigrants never disconnected their relations with relatives and institutions in their country of origin. They always visited there. Those who succeeded took their brothers and relatives along with them, in order to help them. After a few years, when the Druze immigrants established themselves, they searched for other Druze religious men, or men from their own country in the neighbouring areas and states, and tried to connect them and to establish with them common organizations and institutions. Usually new immigrants were followed by those already established and they acted together to find an anchor and safe shelter in the new country. Usually the first immigrants worked as house-to-house sellers. Those of them who were diligent and able to benefit from this job, made enough money to open shops of their own, and if all went right – he enhanced it, in time, to a bigger enterprise. Some of the immigrants fulfilled their dreams since they were lucky and succeeded in becoming rich. Few of these returned to their land, as they intended when they first arrived there. Others stayed, since they were eager to accumulate more money. The majority of them did not succeed but rather barely kept their heads above the water. They established their families, built houses and continued to

work and dream of a better future. The Druze people who immigrated to the West tried to maintain cultural connections with their members of the community in the land of origin. The Druze religion that prohibits the young Druze to marry a non- Druze young surely made it more difficult for the Druze immigrants. While the Muslim and Christian people married local women and through this became accepted and integrated in the local society faster and easier. Unfortunately, some Druze did marry non-Druze women. However, the majority, and especially the first generation, stayed loyal to tradition and kept all Druze commandments. In order to construct and maintain proper communal lives in Diaspora it was necessary to maintain tight connections with the Druze spiritual authority in Syria and Lebanon, in order to receive its permission to perform marriages and divorces ceremonies, or to pray in funerals and other ceremonies. The religious leaders in Lebanon authorized for these immigrants and gave them the permission and authority to perform these acts. It was not easy to do this. In Canada, for example, there was one such authorized man, however the Druze citizens were spread in the various Canadian cities, very far and distanced from each other, but the civilian immigrants coped with this by, for example, concentrating a number of weddings in a short period of time, in order that the authorized person will arrive at several events, in a given and concentrated period of time.

With time the Druze communities in Diaspora strengthened and were able to assist the Druze community in the land of origin. The richest immigrants sent money to Syria and Lebanon during the Druze revolt in 1925, or during the civilian war in Lebanon, during the Seventies and Eighties. There are also evidences of a close and tight relation between the various communities. The big communities maintain annual conferences in order to maintain cultural activity and to make acquaintances between men and women. In such conferences representatives of various communities are also invited, in order to strengthen the connections between them. These conferences became a tradition and a desired goal by Druze factors in the lands of origins, since by this a chance is given to many circles to meet a big concentration of inhabitants living in the Diaspora in a defined time and place.

There is no international organization of the Druze and there are no common institutions integrating the various communities. There is a connection between the spiritual centree in Lebanon and the various communities. Therefore, it is impossible to tell accurately how many Druze people are in every community, since such survey was never made. There

are only general estimates. Therefore, the number of Druze residents in the various communities is estimated as follows:

Saudi and the Gulf States:	30,000
United States and Canada:	100,000
Brazil:	100,000
Venezuela:	70,000
Argentina:	30,000
Western Europe:	70,000
Africa:	80,000
Australia:	60,000
Mexico:	30,000

The rest are spread as individual families in various states and places around the world.

The community in North America

The first Druze arrived to North America at the end of the 19th century. Like all other immigrants from the other countries they dreamt of the great quantities of wealth in North America. The Druze community in the Unites States and Canada is, today, the biggest and most organized community of all communities outside the Middle East. The Druze people in the United States are organized under one international big organization, "The American Druze Society". This organization includes the representatives of the Druze organizations in the various countries. The society holds a general conference every year, in the beginning of July, and each year it is held in a different state. The conference last for a few days, families from all around the United States participate in it, and lectures and discussions are held, as well as social arrangements, and common meals, according to tradition. This conference is in charge of appointing the A.D.S.'s management and institutions. In the society there are various committees in charge of preparing books and pamphlets regarding religion, tradition. Also, there are assistance committee, organization committee, etc. This organization becomes more and more important with time, and is highly important both for Druze people in the United States and for the Druze communities in the countries of origin. The members of organization are anxious to participate

every year. Usually many people arrive, and they are most anxious to maintain the connection with the Druze issues, and to reinforce the Druze tradition, which often becomes blurred with time. The first Druze immigrants who arrived at New York at the end of the 19th century believed they would succeed and thrive. They encountered many difficulties and problems, worked hard and suffered from hunger, shortage, poverty and loneliness, but despite all that they succeeded in establishing themselves, finding work, building or renting apartments and living normal lives. This lasted for 30 to 40 years, until the number of immigrants increased. The newcomers received assistance from the seniors and this enabled them to succeed even more. The first organization of the Druze immigrants in the United States was in the city Seattle, when five people met and decided to construct a unique Druze organization, called "the Druze primogeniture", "El Bakura El Durzia". The organization's goals were to assist the Druze immigrants, to hold social conventions and to organize cultural and other activities. This began in the beginning of the second decade of the 19th century. The first meeting organized by El Bakura was held in 1914. Over 500 people came. This success encouraged the custodians, and this became a tradition and was held every year, and still is held until today. After a few years the first generation of immigrants died, and a new generation of new immigrants, or the children of the old immigrants, arouse. As a result, there was a need to construct a new organization that supplies an answer to the needs of the new immigrants. This organization was constructed in 1946, in Charleston, and was named "The American Druze Society", as mentioned earlier, and it continues to act today.

In 1911 a young Druze Lebanese journalist, Suleiman Bdur, established a newspaper in the Arab language, El Baian. It was spread among Druze people in Diaspora and was highly successful also among readers in the Middle East. It was published until the death of its establisher and publisher, in 1941. After 5 years it reappeared by other immigrating journalists.

The Druze people in Canada are connected in local organizations, such as the Druze' organization in Toronto or in Edmondtown, and other cities. In Canada there is no central organization. The first Druze people arrived to Canada in 1890, from Hasbaia. There are close and good relations exist between the two communities in Canada and the United States. The estimation is that in the two countries there are over 100000 citizens.

The Druze community in South America

In the South American states there are three big congregations of Druze immigrants originally from the Middle East countries. The biggest community lives in Brazil, and includes around 100000 inhabitants. The immigration to Brazil was the earliest, and took place in 1885, by several young people from Lebanon, who came by ship from the port of Beirut, and at first searched for luck and success in the small villages and cities. When they put down roots, after suffering from famine and deficiency, and after filling homesick, they began to arrive to the big cities, where they succeeded better since they were already familiar with the language and the mentality of the residents. This process lasted for several years, but was not easy. Like in all processes of immigration, the first encouraged those following them, and assisted them in their integration into the country. After several years a strong, stable and coherent Druze community was consolidated in Brazil. It constructed the Brazilian Druze house in San Paulo in 1969. It was constructed in order to be a cultural activity centre, and a gathering place at important occasions, as a central place, from which the Druze immigrants were part, and whose aim is to offer assistance to those in need and to initiate cultural and social activity among members. The organization located teachers of the Arabic language, to teach the new generation its religious and national language. Also, the Druze organization publishes a communal journal in Arabic, in order to maintain a continuous connection between all community members, everywhere. The Druze people in Brazil integrated so well in the political and social lives of the country that few of them appointed themselves as nominees for the Brazilian parliament, and even were elected as senators on behalf of all the total population. Some were appointed also as ministers in their regions, such as Asad El Aa'war, who was appointed as the health minister in the Mins Grais state, or Suleiman Hamdan, who was the minister of health in Rio De Janeiro. Others were elected as governors, senior clerks, and mayors, and highly succeeded. Also, in the inter-Arab activity among all immigrants Druze personalities such as the poet Shakib Taki El Din, who was president of the Arab league for culture in San Paulo, were most salient and distinguished. A dominant Druze personality who left his mark on the religious, cultural and social lives of the Druze people in Brazil is Sheikh Najib El Esrawi, a religious man, writer and leader, who composed books in Portuguese about the Druze people, and was a representative of the spiritual authority in Brazil, and a senior spokesman of the local community.

There is wide mobility among the immigrants inside and outside the country to the country-of-origin, and back. Many of the immigrants decided, when they were old, to return to Syria and Lebanon, to their old houses, to repent, and to die there, according to all rules of the Druze tradition. However, their children remained in Brazil and continued to live there.

The community in Venezuela

The second-in-size community in the South American states is that in Venezuela. It is estimated that around 70000 Druze people live there. They live in all parts of the country, but especially in the North and in the cities Marakibu and Karakas. The Druze immigration to Venezuela from Lebanon began in the end of the 19th century. The second wave arrived from Syria and Palestine. The stream of immigration increased after World War One, due to the instability in the area.

The Druze community is also well organized, and has its own unique organizations and institutions. Since there are organized communities in some states in Venezuela, the communal activity is more organized and more solid than in other places. The various organizations publish journals describing their lives and activities. Within this community, also, some persons have been successful and made achievements in economical, political and academic areas. Economically, Druze people were highly successful. Some formed economic firms, which practised international trade and rolled huge amounts of money. Others constructed big banks. Others established big factories and represented leading commercial firms and enterprises. In the political realm, too, there were, and still are, great successes. People were appointed governors or senior clerks in the urban, local and federal government. A famous Druze person, Tarek Saa'b, established a party whose slogan was the unification of all Latin America states. Among the distinguished persons were many doctors, lawyers and other similar professionals.

The community in Argentina

Among the oldest and most organized Druze communities is that in Argentina. The first immigrants arrived to Argentina in the end of the 19^{th} century from Syria and Lebanon. Most of them settled in the Capital, Buenos Aires, and began to consolidate and form organized communal lives. During and after World War One many youths arrived to Argentina from Palestine, maybe following the success of one of the first Druze immigrants. In 1926 Ameer Amin Arslan immigrated to Argentina. He worked with intellectual immigrants on constructing communal institutions. They constructed the Druze Assistance Association as an institution for mutual assistance, whose aim is to assist new immigrants, as well as old immigrants who had troubles and needed assistance. In the same year a newspaper called "Al Istiklal", "Independence", was first published. It was published until 1970. The Argentine association bought a big house in the capital city, which was a house for the members of community and their guests, as well as a gathering place and a place for holding social parties. The Argentine authorities accepted the Druze organization as representing the Druze citizens as early as 1943, which means: accepting and recognizing them as a group of citizens with special status and rights. Ameer Amin Arslan headed this association until his death in 1943, and was replaced by Sheikh Saleh Abu Saleh, whose origin was the village majdal Shams, in the Golan Heights. He decided to return to his village in 1984. He was replaced by Sheikh Amin El Atar. Other figures in the Argentine community were most important in various areas of activities. Some published newspapers, others published songs, some were appointed to high positions in the government, and others practiced economical activity. The Druze community in Argentina was a place wanted and desired by Druze politicians from Syria and Lebanon. Persons as Ameer Shakib Arslan or minister Majid Arslan, and other people, visited the community's house and met the community's members and leaders. Also, the heads of the community were always alert to the crucial events that occurred in Syria and Lebanon, to the Druze concentrations. They sent contributions, wrote sympathetic letters, protested and did all they could to assist their friends. The community in Argentina is not too big, and includes almost 30000 people.

The community in Mexico

Mexico was a destination for Druze immigrants from Lebanon and Syria in the end of the 19th century. They arrived there in the same time that others arrived to the United States and the neighbouring states. The story of absorption of the new immigrants is also identical. The immigration increased after World War One. Mexico's closeness to the United States assisted the young Druze immigrants, since those that experienced difficulties and had problems to adapt themselves, could have been assisted by relatives living in the United States. The Druze in Mexico spread to various cities and lived in small, but consolidated communities. Therefore, they had many organizations and associations established in order to assist each other. They established associations such as the Druze League, the Druze Youth, the Druze Assistance Association, the Druze Mountain Organization, etc. Here, too, the Druze maintained close relations with the sources in Syria and Lebanon and assisted monetarily in times of crises. In this community there were successes of certain people and appointed for important positions in the government, or people who succeeded very well, economically. The estimation is that there are around 30000 civilian Druze people in Mexico.

The Druze in Australia

Australia, the distanced and mysterious continent that was once an exile for criminals and a good place to maintain distance from political centres for English leaders - was a popular and desired location for Druze youths in the third quarter of the 19th century. It is told that the first Druze immigrant arrived to Australia from Lebanon, from the village Beit Miri, in 1875. His name was Yousef Najer and he settled in the city of Adelaide. He worked as a farmer and was well integrated. He was followed by many others. Despite Australia's remoteness and the difficulties to get there, the immigration to Australia was constant and stable. In the middle of the 20th century the immigration rate increased, especially when it became possible to go by planes and not only by ships. The connections between the immigrants and their families became tighter and stronger, and since there was a need for labour and working hands and since every diligent person

that came to Australia had a chance to succeed, many were attracted and settled there, throughout the Sixties and Eighties of the 20th century. The settlers were given wide land areas by the government, and were offered assistance in practicing agriculture, and since these people were diligent and industrious, they were highly successful. They did not choose a certain place to stay in, but spread over all colonized areas in the continent. They organized and constructed the "Druze house" in every big centre. In this house cultural and social activities were held, and a journal was published, which covered the important issues and news related to the Druze people. In addition to agriculture the immigrants also practiced trade and other works. There are about 60000 Druze immigrants in Australia today.

The Druze in Europe

The Druze immigration to Europe is essentially different than the immigration to America or Australia. Poor or adventurous people migrated to the overseas countries, to search for prosperity in these distanced places. To Europe came more economically established people, for aims of studies or commerce. The immigration to Europe was unstable, just like the immigration to overseas countries, due to the easiness in which one can arrive and return, however with time many families were established in places as England, France, Germany, Italy, the Scandinavian countries, Spain, etc. Individuals arrived to these places, found jobs, were absorbed in society and settled in the country. Today it is known that there are Druze immigrants living in almost all European countries, from Turkey to Portugal and Finland. The emigration to the Western Europe countries was mainly from Lebanon, especially for purposes of work or studies, but there was no ideological background, while the emigration to the East European countries and the U.S.S.R did have an ideological basis. The socialist regime in Syria, which nurtured connections with the communist regimes during the Sixties, Seventies and Eighties of the 20th century, encouraged the absorption of individuals and families in those countries. In Lebanon there were good connections between the progressive socialist party, under the leadership of Kamal Junblat, and the leaders of the communist countries. The communist regimes in East Europe dismantled, but the emigrating Druze people who had already settled in these countries stayed there. In all countries there is a strong kernel of immigrants maintaining close connections with its members

and the other centers. In some of the countries there are annual conferences. Some of the immigrants hold these conferences in Lebanon. Periodicals are published by these centres. Usually, all people who succeeded and well established remained in Europe, while those less lucky returned to their home.

The Druze in Africa

The Druze people arrived to Africa along with the colonial conqueror in the end of the 19th century. They arrived there after the states of Africa were already conquered. The Druze immigrants arrived along with Arab immigrants from the Middle East and North Africa to all African states, for purposes of commerce, industry or services. The African people were not developed enough, in this period, to maintain the organizational or commercial activity required to the local population, to the conquering forces and to the European citizens a

Accompanying the colonial governments' delegations. These civilians practised and worked in well defined roles and positions, which were decided ahead by the governors. They also lacked the knowledge and experience to treat the local population. In this time there was need for restaurants, stores, hotels, barber's shops, locksmith's workshops, carpentry workshops and many other similar enterprises. The immigrants from the Middle East and North Africa arrived when this vacuum existed, and began to develop these important businesses. They succeeded very well. Some of them established big companies for gold searching, others practised arms trade and became very wealthy, others constructed factories and plants in the developing countries, and some spread products of famous international companies throughout the continent. Businesses flourished and blossomed especially during the Fifties and Sixties of the 20th century, when the African states began to receive independence. By then the standard of living significantly increased, and the Africans asked for many goods and merchandises. The many emigrants who lived in the African states, including the Druze emigrants, were mediators, importers and traders of goods imported from the west. They accumulated capital through this. It took them a whole generation until the local youths began to study, to go abroad and to import on their own. At the end of the Eighties there were serious riots against emigrants, in several African states. It endangered their

staying and living there. Many sold their houses and businesses and returned home.

Chapter Nine

The Druze faith

According to the Druze perception, the belief in one God is very old. Before millions of years, while others many people were pagans and believed in idols, fire, lights, the sun, demons and other things – some people believed in one all-mighty God, and therefore, they were believers in the unity of God. The foundation of the Druze faith a thousand years ago was the last embodiment and the last revelation to faith. Then the whole public was given an invitation to join the faith. Those who used that opportunity and accepted the new faith joined the group of believers, who then intended to keep and maintain their relationships with the faith through the procedure of incarnation. The principle of incarnation explains also the continuity of faith. The establishers of faith have determined at certain times where one can join the faith. Many dissidents began to narrow and limit the steps of the believers. There was a big danger to the very continuance of the process, therefore those in charge of distributing and promoting faith proclaimed the intermission of the preaching campaign. Then it was determined that every body that had already joined was "inside", and there was no option to receive other believers. Since faith was removed from its "missionary" element, it was not necessary to expose its content. Since in a later phase the Druze were persecuted by others , those in charge of the faith maintained this in a low profile and determined it was necessary to keep the faith's secrecy and not to expose it to the non-believers or to the non-religious Druze. This begun the procedure of maintaining the faith's secrecy. Another reason for the secrecy of faith is its allegorical element. The Druze faith should not be interpreted at the first reading. One has to memorize the words and sentences, and through this process one discovers, more

meanings and interpretations to the same words and sentences. Therefore, it is inappropriate to try to understand faith after the first reading. By learning it, one will discover its treasures. The Druze faith was revolutionary and made reforms in the holy and sacred concepts and principles, it stimulated resistance and persecutions, and since it became secret, there were all kinds of rumours around the faith and the behaviour of the religious men associated with it.

When external people asked the Druze to reveal their faith, they refused, and so the campaign of lies and rumours was reinforced. The imagination of their enemies flourished. With time, the Druze have isolated themselves and lived in the peaks of mountains. This has only strengthened the defamation campaign against them and made it possible for all to say whatever he thinks. With time, this defamation became the possession of all, and they were perceived as solid facts, since there was no response. One can see today in the unbiased history books slanders on Druze that lack any base of truth. This fact has made European researchers and Oriental historians writing contain inaccurate. Since the Druze have chosen to remain silent when asked on their faith, researchers, travelling people and interested parties have turned to their Beduin or Christian neighbours and asked them about the Druze faith. Since the relations between them and the Druze were usually characterized by hostility and animosity, they deliberately gave wrong information on Druze faith and on the social lives and the relationships between families among the Druze families. This situation lasted until 1830s, when the Druze revolted against the Egyptian invader, Ibrahim Pasha. In one of the attacks on a Druze village in Huran Egyptian soldiers succeeded in stealing sacred religious books. Those books were given to the French, who first thought that they discovered the Druze faith. In the riots between the Maronites and the Druze in the middle of the 19th century the former succeeded in stealing Druze religious books and selling them to researchers and European travellers. Despite this, the European researchers failed to realize the deep and real meaning of the Druze faith, since the faith is written in a secret code. Therefore, these researchers were only able to understand the superficial meanings and failed to realize what is actually hiding behind and beyond the words.

The Druze faith is secret , no one can understand it except people of high degree, but there are, nevertheless, a few overt basic principles, which can be discussed in public and which are sufficient to indicate how special and unique this faith is:

1. **A faith in the existence of only one God**: The Druze believe that God is beyond the human cognition, no body knows what He looks like or what His essence is, and He cannot be described physically, at all. He is the almighty; he sees and hears everything, observes the Universe and is proficient with all that occurs in it. He is everywhere, and there is nothing that he does not see.
2. **The day of Judgement**: The Druze believe in the arrival of the day of doom. They believe in the existence of heaven and hell. The believers open their eyes to a new world, filled with belief and purity. The same is true for hell, which will be characterized by ignorance, lack of knowledge and complete religious blindness. However, it will not include physical tortures.
3. **Determinism**: According to the Druze faith, God all mighty determines the destiny of the human being and the crucial phases in his life. They believe that his day of birth, day of death, his physical, social and financial condition, are all pre-determined, and he has no control over them. God has given the brain to the human being in order to improve his life and to enable him to choose what is best for him and his family, but he does not determine the important achievements in one's life, and when a person decides to make a serious and crucial step or act, it is realized as if God has given him permission to do so. The Druze are commanded to submit to the will of God and to his dictates and to accept them even when they do not like them. This principle makes it easier for the Druze, and especially for the most orthodox believers, to accept horrible decrees and decisions such as death, accidents, diseases and other illnesses, since they believe that this is the will of God, and there is certain wisdom in it, which is not yet understood and realized by the human being.
4. **Reincarnation**: According to belief, the soul leaves, at the time of death, the body of the deceased, and transfers to the body of a newborn, and continues to live.
5. **Commandments**: There are some commandments in the Druze faith, which must be obeyed in daily life:

Telling the truth; the most important commandment, since when a person is telling the truth he will avoid doing any other felony or sin, out of the fear that if someone asks him anything he will have to tell the truth. Protecting his collegas: The believers are commanded to protect each other and defend one another, in order to maintain the unity of the whole

community, especially in times of crisis and persecution. The unity of God and accepting God's will and submitting to God's will and accepting all his acts.

6. **Prayers**: According to the Druze faith, there is a direct relationship between the human being and his creator. God is present everywhere, he observes and looks, therefore it is unnecessary to exercise special ceremonies in order to pray. It is sufficient that the believer will turn to God and pray. He can do it while he drives or while he is at work, or any place he desires. The prayer will be heard and will reach its destination if exercised out of honesty and deep belief, and there is no importance to the conditions in which it is done. Moreover, there are no constant hours for prayers, and it can occur in any hour of the day. It is clear that the more religious the person is – the more he prays, and the more time old people dedicate to praying. Orthodox religious men or adults or those practising studying the faith have organized and fixed days and hours of prayers. In addition, there is a practice of praying together, in an organized manner, in order to maintain common belief. This prayer takes place in the prayer house, called "Hilwe", that is: a place of seclusion and isolation. This is usually a simple structure, composed of a big room, which is divided into two separate parts, one is for men and the other for women, and in between there is a curtain enabling a hearing connection, but not a seeing connection, since in the Druze society there is a complete separation between men and women. The prayer house has to be simple; it is forbidden to hang pictures or sculptures. All prayers sit on a mattress or on the floor, and there are no status differences between the prayers. In every prayer house there is a person carrying the title "Imam", that is: a very important religious figure, very knowledgeable in the faith, and he manages the orders of the prayers. The religious believers are called to visit the prayer house, and they pray by reciting famous parts from the religious books.
   Foreigners are not allowed to be present at the prayers, and it is also forbidden for non religious Druze to participate. There is a complete separation between men and women, and the prayer is secret, and since foreigners are not allowed to participate, enemies of the Druze have spread all kinds of imaginary rumours on what occurs inside the prayer house. It is clear that there is no basis to these rumours.

7. **Resting day**: There is no resting day to the Druze. A Druze may rest whenever he wishes. Usually the Druze tended to adapt themselves to the country in which they live to its rules and habits.Since the Druze faith began as Islamic sect and has many Islamic roots, Friday is the preffered day.
8. **Moral**: The Druze faith is one of the most morale groups. All other faiths forgive in some manner to the sins of the believers. The Druze faith does not forgive. A Druze performing one of the two most severe penalties (as perceived by the Druze faith), that is: either murder or adultery – is never forgiven. Other, lighter offences are forgiven. However the process is not simple.The faith regulates the lives of its believers among themselves and between them and strangers in a clear and sharp way.
   The faith books mention clearly which characteristics are to be fostered, for instance: tell the truth, integrity, reliability, modesty, love, wisdom, assistance to others, respecting adults and elders, assisting the weak, etc. Faith denunciates negative traits as lies, theft, hate, jealousy, gossip, slandering, trespassing, etc. It detests murder and adultery.
   The believers are commanded to maintain all commandments.
   When a Druze person dies, at his funeral people mention all his acts and specify and glory his behaviour when he was alive. This habit makes every Druze fear to be remembered as a sinner and so they try to follow all commandments.
9. **Holidays**. The Druze have only one religious holiday: the holiday of the victim, or "Eid El Adha", and it is celebrated with the other Muslim sects. The Druze celebrate the holiday in a resting day, immolation (with sheep as the sacrifice), opening their houses for neighbours and friends and visiting each other. This is the only religious holiday celebrated among all Druze, everywhere and at the same time.
   The Druze have other holidays that were determined in later stages, in which they pilgrim to the graves of their ancestor prophets.
   The holiday of the prophet Shuaib is celebrated in Israel in April and in Lebanon the holiday of pilgrimage to the grave of the prophet Ayub is celebrated in the Shouf Mountains in August. There is a similar celebration among the Druze in Syria. These holidays are usually accepted by the state as a sabbatical and they are performed publicly in a

colourful national atmosphere. The holidays in Israel in this standard are:

a. The holiday of the prophet Shuaib on April 25th, in the prophet's grave, near Kefar Hitin.
b. The holiday of the Hader Elijah the prophet, on January 25th, in Kefar Yasif.
c. The holiday of the prophet Sabalan in September 10th, in Kefar Hurfaish.

10. **Prophets**: The Druze believe all prophets of the monotheistic religions as the emissaries of God on earth. They have a high status and influence, and they are well respected and honoured. There is no one central and salient prophet, like in the other religions, but rather there are a number of prophets, like the prophet Shuaib "Jethro", Elhader Elijah , Aiub, Yosef, Sabalan and others. The Druze prophets appeared along history in different places and in diversified roles, sometimes in the image of prophets and sometimes in other roles, through the principle of incarnation. It is possible that one prophet will have various names.
    Throughout their appearances, these prophets assisted the principle of belief in one God, reinforced it and supported the prophets or emissaries who spread it.
11. **Holy places**: Since the Druze have many prophets, there are also many holy places associated with the prophets. The holy sites became holy because it is believed that the prophets were buried there, or because the prophets lived there for a while. In Israel there are a few holy places with graves, such as the grave of Jethro near Tiberias, the grave of El Hader in Kefar Yassif, the grave of Abu Abdalla in Usfia, the grave of Yafuri in Majdal Shams in the Golan Heights, etc. There are also some holy sites, with no graves, in Daliat El Carmel, Hurfaish, Beit Jan, Abu Snan, etc. The Druze make pilgrimages to the holy sites and maintaining there the vow ceremony, the consultation of religious men or organization of important mass assemblies. Agreed dates of pilgrimage have developed, throughout time, the status and validity of holiday and sabbatical.
    There are many holy sites in Syria and Lebanon, with pilgrimage and mass gatherings. One of the places that is not connected with the prophets is Hilwat El Biada – the prayer house of Biada, southern to Hasbaia, in south Lebanon. This site became holy when it was

established, about 600 years ago, by orthodox sheikhs.Their pupils followed them and with time, this site became an upper house of study for the Druze religion.

12. **The religion men**: The Druze society is divided to two parts: The "Ukal", that is: the religious people, and the non-religious, the "Juhal". The religious men keep the religion fundamentals and maintain all commandments, while the non-religious attempt to protect the Druze society and are not enthusiastic toward joining the religious group. In order to change from the status of "Juhal" to that of "Ukal" one needs to change, to a certain extent, ones way of life. A man has to go through a process of entering the new religion, which usually lasts for six months, and to prove that he is worthy of being a part of the community of believers. The Sheiks research the man's past and if they find that his past is clean, with no sin, he will be accepted to the higher status. However, if he confesses, or if it is found out that he either murdered or committed adultery, he will be accepted only as a member of the second status of religious men. The difference between the two statuses is the participation in the mass prayers: a man from the second level of status has to leave the session of the group of believers whenever he starts praying. He is usually familiar with the content of the prayer, but the sanction is that a man who committed a sin has to demonstrate always that he has committed a sin, and that because of this he is not worthy of being a part of the orthodox believers group. However, his rights as a religious man are the same rights as everyone else, and it does not reduce or diminish his religious capacities.

Reincarnation

This is a universal principle that exists since the creation of mankind, and relates to all religions and all people in the universe. However this principle is the main foundation in the Druze faith . The Druze claim that all the monotheistic religions also accept this principle. Islam, Judaism and Christianity do not negate the basis of incarnation and the return of the soul to the body, some day, after death. In these religions there are explicit verses pointing to the existence of this phenomenon. However this fact is not so

stressed and emphasized as in the Druze faith. It does have to receive adequate interpretations and references in order to be clear, salient and convincing. The other religions do not focus on this issue or highly emphasize it. The Druze faith sees this issue as a main foundation and basis of the universe in the creation of humanity, its development, the day of judgement and for issues of good and bad.

The Druze persistently held this belief for thousand years. They were mocked for this, and were the goal of attacks and raging arguments, but they stood fast in this belief. Finally the academic world learned to accept the fact that reincarnation does exist. The issue is studied in universities and receives the attention and recognition of famous scientists and professors. It also penetrated to the cognition of many unreligious and non-academic elements, which have highly interested in this issue and as a result, there are discussions and searches for the truths behind this phenomenon.

Reincarnation is a spiritual biological phenomenon expressed by the belief that the human's soul is eternal. It passes, from the creation of the world, from the body of a dead person to that of a newborn. A male's soul reincarnates in the body of a male, and the same is true for the females. The soul reincarnates only from one human being to another and never transfers to the body of an animal, a plant or an inanimate object, as believed in many other places around the world.

According to the Druze faith the soul, in its various reincarnations, moves through many bodies in several generations. Every soul exists since the creation and lasts until the day of judgement, and with time it moves from one body to another. According to the Druze faith God created, first of all, the souls, and than transplanted them in the human beings' bodies. Throughout all generations, the evil and good forces fight and struggle over the soul. The soul and the human mind, which exist in the human being's body in a certain period of incarnation, are given the choice to distinguish between good and bad, and to act accordingly.

The God all mighty cannot acquit or pronounce a certain person guilty, in the day of judgement, according to one-generation lives. How, for example, should an eight years old child be judged? What treatment will he receive in the day of doom? How should one judge a man whose liberty and freedoms were taken away from him and as a result he had to do bad things? Similar situations point that it is impossible to judge a human being only according to his behaviour throughout one life circle. The godlike justice demands to judge him according to the sum of his behaviours throughout the human history. According to the Druze belief, the universe exists for

millions of years, and this is a long enough period for examining the behaviour of the soul throughout the generations, and to make a justice trial.

All religions believe in the resurrection of the dead, that is: some day the soul will re-enter and reincarnate in the same body that it was inside before. If this is so – the world exists for a long period, and the question is: those who live today – where were their souls through all this long period, and where will it "go" when he dies? He is made of matter and therefore after he dies he rots. How can a rotten body be resurrected? The Druze explanation logically resolves the problem: the soul moves from one body to another, the body wears, since it is no more important, and the soul, which is not material, does not wear and lasts throughout generations. In some cultures believing in reincarnation the belief is the existence of an element of punishment and reward. The punishment is expressed in causing reincarnation of the soul in an inferior creature, and the reward is expressed by reincarnation in a higher, superior creature. They exaggerate and reach absurdity in their belief that the punishment given to the soul is expressed by its reincarnation in the body of a fly, mouse or such animals. The Druze faith opposes this theory and rejects it on the threshold, and relates to this as distortion of the truth. It also accepts that there is an element of reward and punishment, however, it is expressed when a man, in a certain life, is very rich and highly successful, and in his other lives he suffers from poverty, shortage, disability or any other problem. The Druze faith believes that God all mighty behaves in compassion and in equality toward all human beings. If the human being and the soul only live once, why are some people born blind, disabled or poor, while others receive a great heritage or become very wealthy and live in big houses? Where is the godlike justice? How can one explain such disasters as earthquakes or floods, or epidemics that cause the death of hundreds and thousands, if this is the only opportunity they have to live? According to the Druze faith, the godlike justice is revealed and expressed by the process in which the same soul is reincarnated and in these it is given the chance to taste from all luxuries of life and to experience all possible situations and experiences. Therefore, a believing Druze accepts his destiny, knowing that if he suffers in his lifetime, it is presumed that in the former life he was better off, or maybe in the future it will get better. He will always be filled with hope and expect the good to come and by this, he improves his state and elevates his morale, and he will be able to overcome his problems by his hope, and will not be depressed. The fact that a person believes, or even knows, that if he dies now, that does not mean the end of his way, but rather that he continues to live inside a different body, is

accompanied by a sense of continuity and strength, and it gives him courage when he needs it, for example: during wars, or when he has to demonstrate determination and diligence. In the last civil war in Lebanon, when the Falanges tried to banish the Druze from Lebanon and to kill them, all Druze gathered and repulsed their attacks. The price was many Druze youth died. During this war the number of young religious Druze that fought was highly remarkable. The Falanges conquered the town Abai, the site of the grave of the greatest Druze theologian, the saint El Ameer El Sayed. They acted in a barbarian manner and destroyed the grave and the surrounding praying-house, in order to eliminate all evidence of Druze holy sites in the area. This act awakened the religious enthusiasm among the Druze youth and pushed them to sacrifice what was most precious for them for the releasing of the holy site. During the fight the young Druze used to say: "How good it is to drink hot milk again", that is to say: It is good to die and to reborn, and to suck hot milk.

The young Druze were always strong and encouraged, and never feared from being in conflict and confronting stronger forces and elements, both because they were brave warriors, mountain people, believing in their justice, and because of their belief that life does not end by their current death, and that they have eternal lives, and that if they die now – they will continue to live elsewhere.

This faith assists also when the human being suffers and lives difficult lives, when he suffers from an economical, health or mental problems, or experiencing suffering or oppression. In these circumstances it is his comfort that nothing is lost and that there is a chance that in the future he will have a better life. This enables him to gather strength and to overcome his problems, and to try to solve them.

This principle may explain the high surviving capability of the Druze community, which in present includes around 1.5 Million persons, for a thousand year, in a hostile environment, while experiencing brutal persecutions, murders and sometimes even genocide. When the faith was established, there was a great slaughter of the Druze believers in Antiochia in Turkey, where the whole community was slaughtered. Similar slaughters took place in Egypt, Halab, Lebanon and other places, and despite all that the Druze community continued to exist. It also experienced some good periods. It was not always depressing and black. The Druze ruled in Lebanon, North Palestine, the Druze Mountain, Halab and the Hermon Mountain for centuries, and maintained good and happy lives. These ups-

and -downs verify their basic principle: that through reincarnation a human being gets to experience all situations and circumstances.

According to the Druze faith , the number of souls around the world is always the same, and never changes. How, then, can one explain the increase in population, which occurs every day? The explanation given by interpreters resolves this mystery, by claiming that,may be, in the universe, there are lives not only in Earth, but rather there are lives in other worlds, too, and since there is recurrence in the universe, if there is an increase in the number of people in our planet, in another planet their number reduces and their souls come to our planet.

Other religions believing in the principle of resurrection of the dead do not explain from where the souls that give life to the newborns arrive, and do not explain where they disappear with death, and where they stay until the coming of the end of days, in order to return to lives. No religion explains how many people or souls there are, in the universe, why this number keeps growing and how come there is such a reservoir of souls, which keeps growing. If we believe that every person that lived in any period in history is about to revive, by a separate soul, we need a huge number of souls: billions of souls.

Scientists found that only in our galaxy there are thousands of stars similar to Earth, in the probability of having conditions that allow for the existence of human beings. We know that in the universe there are millions of galaxies, and therefore we have a basis to believe that there are other human creatures in other worlds, in addition to our world.

There is another aspect of the issue of reincarnation: the ability to remember in a certain life details and pieces of information about previous lives. According to the Druze faith, the chances for this are low, since the soul disconnects the body and leaves it. The memory is related to the brain and to the material part of the body, which has nothing to do with the soul, and it does not "travel along" with it. The human brain is an inseparable part of the human's material body, and is not attached to the soul, therefore religiously speaking it is not necessary that people remember details from their previous lives.

In practice, there are many phenomena in the Druze society in which human beings are able to remember details from their last lives, only when they are young. Usually people fail to remember their previous lives. People who died in a natural way are not likely to be capable of remembering, however, people whose death was sudden and sharp, remember, when they are up to ten years old, details and images from their previous lives. Such

people are capable of remembering the faces of their beloved, places, events and many other details. The phenomenon of children telling stories from previous lives is common and popular in the Druze villages, and it is taken seriously, and children are encouraged to talk, since a child who was murdered in the previous lives, or whose lives were cut suddenly, moves to his new lives when he is mentally restless. He acts in nervousness, cries, screams, throws objects, curses and is not quiet, since something burdens and disturbs him, and he discovers inconsistency between the world that he knew before and the reality to which he was born. In his first few years he can not speak, therefore can not express himself. Only when he is four or five years old he begins to mention names not familiar to his family. When his family member hear him they know that he mentions names of people that he loved in his former lives, they ask him about it and encourage him to express himself and to tell what he knows. Once he tells them details about his former lives, he is relieved, and as a result his behaviour changes and he becomes more relaxed, and starts to get used to his new environment. Such a child feels very happy if members of his former family are discovered and a meeting is held between them. Children who succeed in remembering details from their former lives create a unique, strange and socially interesting phenomenon: the differences between ages disappear. You meet a most distinguished person, with a thick moustache, two m high, holding the hand of a five year old child and tells you: "This is my mother!" Of course, you find it hard to believe and to accept. The Druze persons familiar with this phenomenon immediately understand what it is all about, while others relate to this as a joke and pay no special attention to this. The reincarnation, and all that is related to it, are equally shared between males and females. Due to the modesty nature of women, male stories are more emphasized and more famous.

In one of the villages in the Carmel a small, delicate child, began to mention names and issues that are totally unknown and have nothing to do with the place in which she lived, and she did it in a constant and fluent manner, while telling details. Her parents and family understood what was happening, and asked her for more details. They understood that she was a 70 years old mother from one of the villages in the Galilee, had nine sons and two daughters and many grandsons. She and her husband were, like most inhabitants during the Fifties, farmers. The child remembered that one day she went to the field, to rest. She fell asleep and she was stung. She died in pain a few hours later. She remembered many details from her last hours. Immediately after she was stung she cried from pain. Her husband, who

worked not far from there, ran to her, and she heard him saying that it was a snake. From his behaviour she realized that he killed it. He carried her on his donkey and brought her to her house in the village. Some of her sons were in the house, and rushed her to hospital. Unfortunately, she died on the way. She remembered that her oldest son burst into tears when the vehicle began driving. One of her youngest sons asked the oldest why he was crying. Mother was still alive, he said, and on her way to hospital, where she will be treated. The oldest son continued to weep all the way to the hospital.

The little child's parents asked friends and relatives of the Galilee village about the family, and they verified the details. They told the family members, in the Galilee, about their mother's soul, which was transferred into the body of a child living in a village in the Carmel. Two of her sons decided to go there, and visited the house of the four years old child. She immediately recognized them, hugged and kissed them, and everyone was crying, including the parents and the neighbours. The two sons invited the child, her parents and relatives, to visit them. They accepted the invitation and one day a convoy of cars went to the Galilee. When it arrived at the centre of the village it stopped. The child was asked to lead everyone to her former house. She asked everyone to get off the vehicles, and they began to walk by foot. There was a long line of distinguished and important figures, wearing the traditional Druze cloths, gasping and breathing heavily in the twisting tracks, following a little child walking toward its past. After a few minutes the child stopped in front of an iron gate, looked at it for a moment, twisted her face as if something was not right, turned the handle and tried to open the door, however she failed to do it. Somebody helped her, and they all got inside, to a big square in front of the house. In the wide guestroom sat about 40 men, all of them inhabitants of the village, and waited for the guests. The nine boys were among them. The child stood for a moment, looked at everyone and ran toward all brothers, when she moved from the oldest to the youngest, kissed them and expressed her love and longings. It was an exciting moment even for the most experienced men, who experienced, during their lives, more exciting and difficult experiences. Everybody is familiar with this phenomenon and believes in it, therefore they were all willing to take part in this event, which includes the unification of families, and the creation of good relationships between two families, until that moment totally foreign to each other. The child retold many details of the family and knew figures and people, so there was no doubt that she was, indeed, the mother. The children themselves made their own examination of the child's memories. The external gate was never

closed, as commanded and ordered by the mother, who thought it was important to keep the house opened to visitors. They closed the gate to examine her reaction.

This is only one of thousands of cases that appear as daily events. Some people were murdered and after they were reborn they discovered who killed them. Others discovered treasures that they have hidden before their death, and no body knew about their existence. Someone returned to her previous home after several years and yelled on her husband, blaming him for getting married again, after her death.

The issue of reincarnation created a unique folklore and special behaviours and social norms only accepted in the Druze society. This element enhances the sense of equality and democracy among the civilians. A man in a high position knows that it is wrong for him to patronize and to abuse people, since there is always an option that in the future he will be born to a poor family. The same goes for a poor and miserable person: he must not give up, since he might be reborn in a wealthy or respected house. Some murder cases were resolved and decoded after years, when children discovered who were their murderers. These had no legal validity, but socially, a man who committed a murder and was traced and discovered, suffered his all lives from a stigma and a mark of disgrace. Therefore, this phenomenon includes an element of deterrent. It was already discussed here that the issue of reincarnation encourages courage and sacrifice among the Druze warriors. It also increases the custom of mutual assistance between people, and creates social connections among families. When Druze from Lebanon and Israel met and reunited in 1982, after a 34 years long disconnection, one of the poets read a song in which he said that "even though we have not met for years, the reincarnation of our souls enable the disconnection and the permanent integration of the connections between us".

Chapter Ten

The Characteristics of the Druze society

The Druze have lived, in their thousand years of existence, in a homogeneous, closed and differentiated society. Their surrounding environment was not at all strange to them, and there are many common factors and ways of life. However the Druze society was different in several aspects, which ensured its continuous existence, despite the attacks and alienation of the sometimes-hostile surrounding society. The characteristics of the Druze society can be summarized as follows:

1. **A religious society**: The most important characteristic that differentiated the Druze from their neighbours was the element of the separate religious belief and faith. The Druze lived among Muslim and Christian neighbours. The Druze people are part of the wide Islamic world, in their historical origins, their belief in the fundamentals of Islam, the identical ethnic relation and homogenous political involvement. However, they are different in their close, isolated nature, and a society that is very strict about following and keeping various fundamentals commandments that are different from those accepted in the wider society. Excluding the second half of the Twentieth century, the Druze people inside the internal society were all religious and followed all religious commandments. Although there were different levels of religiosity among the religious men, the general character and nature of the society was purely religious. In addition, the religious figures had a crucial and dominant influence upon the population. There political leaders were religious leaders, as well.
2. **A traditional society**: The Druze society respected tradition and maintained its ancient way of life, and tried to reject and fight

against any difference, renovation or exception as part of its struggle to consolidate and keep an independent and different identity. The traditional Druze dressings remained the same for centuries, except for several changes, according to the fashion. The Druze house almost did not change. The marriage customs, the welcome of guests, behaviour on holidays, the mourning habits, the ceremonies accompanying the birth of a boy or a girl, the relation to and treatment of sick and old men, the education of children, the penalties enforced on delinquents, and other factors – remained the same within the Druze society, all the time, and in all places.

3. **An agrarian society**: the majority of Druze people lived in agricultural areas and practised, almost exclusively, agriculture. Every family had its own land, big or small, according to its needs and ability. In this land the family grew seeds. In addition, every family had a chicken- pen, a cowshed and a stable, near the house. These were usually for self-maintenance and not for trade. The basic food was supplied by the domestic farm: meet, milk, eggs, etc. The land around the house was utilized for growing fruits and vegetables required for the daily use. Usually, each family supplied its own - needs. In every Druze settlement there were a few people who practised trading, constructing, taking care of the sick and other professions. However, these were only few, according to the needs of the settlement.
4. **A rural society**: The Druze society lived in small rural settlements. There are no big Druze cities. The oldest Druze settlement near Mount Hermon, Haleb area, or Palestine – began as rural settlements, and remained the same. There is a different mentality in the village from that in cities. All inhabitants know each other, assist and take care of each other inside the village. The form of self-defence and self-protection in the villages is more efficient and effective. It is easier to keep tradition and follow the habits. The mutual assistance is more effectively done.
5. **A mountainous society**: the first Druze people that adopted the Druze belief were persecuted by the Sunni majority, which did not know how to accept and relate to such a different setting. Belief was established in Egypt, but, except for the first years, there is no sign for the existence of communal Druze existence in Egypt. It is possible that there are few individual Druze persons living in Egypt without acting in a different manner. In the heights of the mountains

Druze were able to manage their lives more peacefully and quietly than in places close to the city. That does not mean that their persecutor left their alone, but in the mountains they were capable of better defending themselves.

6. **A military society**: Throughout all Druze history there were endless struggles and wars against governors, intruders, hostile neighbours, robbers and others. This situation obliged them to be alert all the time. They had no way to know when they will be attacked, and by whom. The men were warriors-in-potential almost until they turned 70. The children learned to ride a horse, to fight, from a very young age. Women were practised in continuously pushing away every danger, and to defend themselves, when required. All the time calm, peaceful, harmless Druze, were attacked: during work, at night, in holidays, and in many other occasions. Therefore, they became practised in being alert and in pushing away any dangers that may evolve.
7. **A clan society**: The entire Druze society is compounded of big clans. In every village there are several clans. Some clans are compounded of more than one village. Living within such a setting obliges the individual to be more involved in the lives of community than the involvement of citizens in big cities, for example. On the other hand, he is better-protected and taken care of, in times of crisis. Usually the biggest clan was the hegemonic leadership in the village. The head of the big clan is the leader, the religious figure or the Mukhtar. Two equal-in-power clans usually share the leading of the village. Sometimes there were clashes and bloody rivalries among the various clans, because of disputes and quarrels about leadership, lands, etc.
8. **A tribal society**: the origin of the Druze society is big Arab tribes that wandered from Yemen and the Arab peninsula, settled in Iraq, and from there wandered to Lebanon , Syria and north Palestine. The Arab tribes have clear, unequivocal and binding behaviour rules. Inside the villages they split into various sections, but maintained their loyalty and affinity to the big tribal setting. Also, they continued to act according to the tribe's norms and rules. The Druze people lived all the time next to a tribal society with similar behaviour rules, and this has reinforced the tribal element amongst them.

9. **A closed ethnic society**: All those who accepted the Druze faith committed themselves to keep the basic Druze rules and commandments. In a certain phase in the establishment of the Druze faith it was impossible for non-Druze people to join this setting. Druze, men and women, can only get married with each other. A Druze man is forbidden to marry a non-Druze woman, and vice versa. Those who failed to keep this basic rule had to leave the community. Those that stayed were born to families in which both parents were Druze. Through this the Druze society maintained its origin. The Druze, it is important to point out, did not seclude or shut themselves off from the surrounding world, but rather were highly involved in what was happening in their surroundings. Despite this they still kept their unique nature and were not tempted to break the setting. Druze students travelled far to study, but they returned to their villages and married local women. Soldiers were out of their villages for months and even years. However, eventually they returned and maintained normal lives in their villages, according to the rules.
10. **An Elitist society**: Since the Druze society is secluded and isolated in nature, and since it is very important that the marriages will be inter-communal marriages, that is: only amongst the Druze themselves, and since this society tries to solve its problems internally and takes care of, and accompanies its members wherever they go – it can also be considered as an elitist society, in the sense that it feels superior to other societies. The principle of the secrecy of religion, and the prohibition to marry strangers, make the Druze people feel superior to other societies and observing them from above. However, this should not be interpreted as an arrogant behaviour.
11. **An equal society**: The Druze society is constructed in such a way that all its components – men, women, children – feel as equal within the society. That does not mean that there is a real equality. There were some periods in the Druze' history when statuses were established within the Druze society in Lebanon, and later in the Druze mountain in Syria. These statuses were the result of the need of dominant families to rule. The belief in reincarnation enforces the Druze people to act and behave as equals, since the soul transfers from one body to another, with no intentional direction, and incarnates within the bodies of human beings from different statuses.

Moreover, socially and religiously women are imparted the same rights and treatment as men. In the Druze society not only are the components of society equal, but also everyone is offered shelter or protection by the Druze and is encouraged to feel equality.

12. **A moral society**: Since it is a secluded, closed, religious and equal society, which operates in small units, the morality is very high in this society, and the behaviour norms are highly binding. The Druze belief demands that all members of Druze society act with integrity and adequately in all circumstances. Every deviation from such behaviour leads to significant sanctions on the delinquent by the religious men and those in charge of social issues. These sanctions can be very severe. They are not difficult physically, but they involve social excommunication. Therefore, all components of society attempt to avoid such punishment. In certain period the level of morality was so high that everyone who committed any offence would have come to the group of believers in the Khalwe (the Druze praying house) and announce them that he himself has decided to punish himself in a certain way, since he made an offence and therefore punishes himself (the version of those people is, usually, that God Almighty observes all that human being do, including offences, and it is, therefore, useless to hide that offence). These people are usually supported and appreciated by society.
13. **A patriarchal society**: Druze people, like all Orientals, live in a family structure in which the father of the family has the exclusive authority and he makes the final decisions in all issues. The father usually decides upon the agenda of the family, the preferences of the family and the actions and courses of actions to be made. The mother has an important role, however this is secret and concealed. Many families adopt a democratic way of life inside the family and far from the eyes of strangers, however, regarding connection with external factors – the father's authority becomes dominant. In the Druze society, which was experiencing pressures for thousand years, the father's image was perceived as the person defending and protecting the family from external dangers, therefore all family members accepted the father's authority.
14. **A socialist society**: The Druze were socialist centuries before the ideas of Marx, Angels and others, evolved and began to spread. The structure of the family and the clan in the Druze village is such that every wrong and evil is perceived as shared by many, and every

achievement is perceived as something that many people enjoy. The Druze society teaches its members to assist each other, in order to keep going. Whenever a Druze builds a house or marries his son, or when somebody dies – the entire community gathers and cooperates in order to assist, aid and support. A Druze leader shares his family members in crucial decisions and he does not make actions based on his opinion exclusively. In the wars of the Druze many men were killed. As a consequence, many families were left with no maintainer, but they suffered no deficiency, since the entire society gathered to assist and support them.

15. **An ambitious society**: The Druze religious figures aspire to know and to study more the religious books. Those who succeed in learning by heart all religious books are perceived as most educated and authorized men, in religious issues. The society encourages its members to study, to work, to accomplish, to advance and to excel. A successful man is highly appreciated by the entire village. The religious figures support political leaders, military commanders, educated men and businessmen, in order for them to advance, succeed and bring respect to the society. The provincial, closed society is proud of each and every accomplishment, no matter big or small, of its members. Until the 20^{th} century the members of community were proud of their military, religious or political achievements, however in the last few decades the Druze society turned and directed itself toward education, while consciously giving up and abandoning some of the traditional conservatism that characterized it. In these years the Druze are trying to compensate on the lagging behind of many centuries and try to advance and to excel.
16. **A loyal society**: The Druze live in many states in the Middle East and in the wide world. Regarding their national identity – they are proud of their cultural and historical affiliation and belonging to the Arab nationality. In their main countries they are loyal to this idea, respect it and work for it. In states such as Israel, United States, Canada, Australia and others – they are completely loyal to the rule and government of that state, as long as it respects them, defends them and treats them as equal citizens. At the individual level a Druze who works in a certain firm, or in a foreign country, or in some organization, is completely loyal to his employer, spends all his time and vigour at work and does all that he can to satisfy his

employer. This is, for him, a way of life dictated by the Druze religion, and the Druze moral norms. Therefore, Druze employees in Arab or international firms are always welcomed and even highly requested, and they are successful and promoted due to their loyalty and devotion, and hard work.

The Druze woman

The Druze faith gives equal status to men and women. The equality is complete and can be applied to all areas. The woman's status is deeply anchored and rooted in the most secret Druze religious books. Since the religious Druze ritual is constructed on a constant learning and memorizing of the religious books, by the believers, the founders of faith wanted to assure the maintenance and existence of the rules related to women. The religious letters explain the rules that should regulate the duties and rights of both husbands and wives. The religion emphasizes the principle of equality and determines that the duty of the believing man is to compare his wife to himself and to be fair to her in all that relates to his property. This equality is expressed both in the religious-traditional realm and in the secular realm. When the Druze faith was established, in the beginning of the 11th century, one woman, whose name was "lady Sara, Sit Sara", was very famous in her extensive activity. She was sent, by the spreaders and distributors of faith to important religious missions in South Lebanon and Bahrein, and she carried some important assignments. Women are required to be familiar with the religious commandments, and therefore they have to be educated and to know how to read and write, in order to be able to interpret and decode the religious writings. Today it seems obvious, but if we look at the Mediterranean as it was a few hundred years ago, we will find that Druze women were almost exclusively the literates, among other Oriental women.

The Druze faith gives women the right to educate children and to teach them reading and writing, the various sciences, arts and literature. It encourages the division of the familial burden: The husband goes to work and takes care of supporting and maintaining the family, and the woman is in charge of managing the house and creating a good atmosphere for the husband, when he comes home. The Druze faith positively differentiates the woman when it relates to her as a believing woman, a member of the religious group, unless she has performed something that keeps her from

this. In comparison, the Druze man is not perceived as religious automatically and he has to ask the public of religious figures to accept him to the "Ukal" group after he proves, in acts, that he is worthy of it.

The Druze faith has always forbidden both believers and non-believers, to marry more than one woman. It allows divorce both to men and women, that is: a woman, who from any reason detests her husband, can ask to banish him. The faith is very strict in the issue of divorce and determines that if banishment can occur. It is, under all circumstances, totally forbidden to live together again. The aim of this is to make it difficult for a couple to divorce, and to alert the couple that this act is final and irreversible, and therefore it is recommended to think seriously before performing such act.

In any such case the property is divided equally between the couple. It is forbidden to discriminate one side and deprive him from his rights, unless it can be proved that he committed adultery or intentionally damaged the marriage.

It is clear that if a woman is given the right to divorce, she is also entitled of choosing her second husband. Despite the fact that the Druze society has always been a patriarchal clan, women were given the right to give their consent to the marriage and to the selected husband. An authorized representative of the religious institute performs marriage. The first condition for fulfilling the marriage pact is the woman's willingness and consent, in the presence of public and witnesses. This prevents the trading in the woman and unwillingly and her consent to a marriage, due to economic, financial or other interests of her father.

After the marriage the couple is commanded to share everything equally. As a result of the influence of the Oriental environment in which the Druze lived for centuries, the custom of dowry was adopted. That means: the payment that the groom has to pay to the father of the bride in the time of marriage. In the traditional Druze villages, the dowry was either symbolic or it was used to buy for the bride basic products that will become hers after marriage. However, in mixed, integrated villages, some Druze parents have taken the money for themselves, just like their Christian and Muslim neighbours. In the last decades this custom was cancelled by the religious Druze leaders in all settlements. Today, even while engaged, each of the couple works, each in his own way, to assure the existence of the future-home: by paying money to the constructors, and by collecting and purchasing all kinds of goods for the house: furniture, electricity products, etc. However, the work of preparing the new home is done by the mutual efforts of both two families.

The total equality between the Druze men and women is also expressed in the issue of heritage: there is no difference between the sexes, and the heritage is divided equally between all children of the family.

The Druze faith gives women many rights, but on the other side, imposes certain duties, such as: a modest clothing to cover her whole body, a prohibition to be in the company of strange men (she is also allowed to be around her first-level relatives), she has to treat every man as if he was her son or brother. Even though faith will allow her to learn and teach, as a necessity, as long as there is no other solution, her role is to be at home and to raise the children, and to take care of all the needs of the husband and to be a good housewife and good host.

Socially speaking, the condition of the Druze woman was a little different. The Druze lived in isolated villages, both men and women received no proper education, and only in the last decades did we witness the phenomenon of opening and exposing the Druze villages to the modern influences. This exposure is equally accepted by men and women, and both sexes enjoy its influence: they both study in universities, enter the work circle and make trips around the world. In the past the Druze society was influenced by the neighbouring Oriental society, which regarded women as inferior. Also, because of the persecutions of the Druze society, there was an attempt to keep women inside the house and villages, as all other societies did. Indecent and disgraceful habits, such as murder due to respect of the family, have penetrated also to the Druze society and were sometimes performed due under the influence of the general social pressure, even though the Druze faith detests murder and relates to it as a sin that can not be forgiven and indulged.

Regarding the respect of family – the Druze society is highly jealous and very strict. This is a very sensitive issue, since the Druze see in the woman one of the three most important factors in the life of every Druze. These are: religion, land and the woman. The Druze woman enjoys a status close to sanctity, and she has to maintain her respect and the respect of her family. Usually the Druze women keep their respect and society's expectations of them. However there were a few cases of small or large deviations from the "right way". Such cases ended in an armed fight between families, which was bloody, but usually the communities' honourable and respected seniors interfered and solved the problem peacefully, by finding a formula that will maintain the respect of the family and in the same time will solve the quarrel. For example: when a woman falls in love with a son of an adversary family, and her father refuses to let

her marry him and she insists on marrying that son – there is an option of an external solution: If neither side is convinced and giving up, the woman will leave the house of her parents with her beloved, but they will find shelter and defence in the house of one of the honoured people. Usually the woman does not allow her beloved to touch her, in order to keep the purification of the family. In this state of affairs the honoured man operates along with others and compromises between the two families. The father has to accept the wedding, which is performed quickly and according to the rules. If the family dignity was not broken – the family forgives the rebellious daughter, but if it is proved that the respect of the family was broken – there is a stain for the family, and sometimes this ends in murder.

The high moral ground required from the Druze woman is also required from the Druze man. Despite the fact that faith enables the man to go far away in order to provide his family – it enforces the same restrictions as it imposes on women. He has to keep his integrity, as well as the integrity of other women, Druze and non-Druze. He is not allowed to have affairs. He is even not allowed to sit alone with a woman and to desire a woman, even from distance. The faith is very extreme with women and a man who commits adultery can never be forgiven. Adultery is identical to murder in the fact that it is unforgivable in the Druze faith, and those who commit one of those crimes will suffer for the rest of his life. Therefore, every man has to think very seriously before tempting one of those acts. The punishment for murder and adultery is different than the punishment given by most societies, because the Druze loses his right to reach fully the secrets of faith, and in every religious convention he has to leave the place before the rest of the believers.

The Druze men who vigorously keep the honour and integrity of their women also vigorously keep the integrity of other women. In the many wars that Druze had against their enemies, they never harmed a woman and never used their power or ability to hurt women, even though their enemies harmed the Druze women, when they win.

Many of the enemies of the Druze have published books and memories from their wars with the Druze, and all of them mention the fact that the Druze never misused their military advantage, regarding women. In all thousand years of the existence of the Druze community, most of her warriors were religious men, and high morals was their way of living.

The Druze society and faith saw no wrong in the fact that women fought alongside men. The Druze history is filled with stories about women who rode on horses, alongside men, and fought with them, or women who

stood in the fire line and assisted the wounded or gave water to the warriors or simply encouraged them. The existence of women in the battlefield has greatly encouraged the Druze warriors, and made them even increase their efforts and do whatever they can to win the fights, in order to protect their families and friends.

In the Druze history there were cases when a war started over a woman. In 1896 this is exactly what happened, in the Urman war between the Ottoman authorities and the Druze settlement in Syria. The war was a result of an incidence, in which the Ottoman commander in Damascus saw a young Druze woman, "Mitha El Atrash", in the village Urman. He fell in love and wanted to marry her. The Druze rules forbid men and women to marry non- Druze, and no one agreed and accepted the request of the commander. He, therefore, declared war on the Druze. The war caused many casualties from both sides and ended in a win of the Druze and in repulse of the broken-hearted attacker.

When a woman becomes a widow she is allowed to remarry. In the past, the widow married one of the deceased's brothers, and then all problems were solved, however, if the deceased has no brothers who can marry or that a brother is not interested – the widow is allowed to marry whoever she wishes, as long as she will give up custody of the children and will leave them under the custody of her late husband's family, because no family allows that her children can grow and live under the custody of a strange man, Usually the widow prefers not to remarry at all and to keep her children. Sometimes she waits until her youngest child marries, and only then she allows herself to get married. Today, in the Druze villages in Israel and outside, there are many young and beautiful widows who refused to remarry and who look after their children with love.

The Druze faith requires the women marry and raise children properly, and by this a woman assures the maintenance and existence of the family and the continuity of mankind. On the other hand, the conservative Druze society highly appreciates religious women who are aging and keeping their virginity. Such women, usually, concentrate on the secrets and mysteries of faith, and dedicate most of their time to assist families in need and for the memorizing the religious books. They are usually few in numbers, and they are unique, and receive the respect and admiration of society. Also, married women who have married all their children, try, when they are old, to dedicate themselves to faith, and they receive the respect and appreciation of society.

The upper, highest appreciation and respect level is kept for the religious married couples that, in a certain stage in their lives, give up sex relations. The husband declares his wife as if she was his sister and they both reach the decision to abstain from sexual relations. It is forbidden for only one person in the couple to reach this decision, it has to be mutual, and then the couple reaches the upper level of purity. It is a very difficult decision, and once decided – it is difficult to retreat.
Those cases are few in number, but they do exist.

The Druze faith does not encourage large families. According to it is suggested that a family should have a child every three years, in order to give the baby the attention he or she deserves and the adequate education. There is no dictate of a specific number of children, but there is a preference of a reasonable number. There is no encouragement of such a procedure as "procreation". Socially, the Druze tended to have many children, and the Druze family is known as such. This was a result of the general social climate in the area and from economic motives, when the family who cultivated her land needed reliable and cheap working forces. In contrast, maintenance was not expensive and the household, which owned fields and cows and all kinds of self agricultural growths, was able to support many people, and therefore the many children were no burden for the family. It was a simple way of life.

Druze Customs

Many talk about the pleasing customs of the Druze. Among these it is possible to include the European travellers who visited the area from the 17th century, the consuls of the nations who maintained contacts with the Druze, the Christian and Muslim neighbours that lived among them and the Arab writers and historians, who researched the community's annals, or who visited Druze friends and participated in their events. As for the Druze themselves- they tend not to speak about themselves and only lately books written by Druze were published, discussing their history and lives. Since the Druze society is a rural-mountainous or desert-like society, and since the Druze faith dictates special behaviours, and in light of the fact that the Druze were always persecuted, they developed customs and ways of life similar to their neighbours. However they sometimes differ in their emphasis or in a special nature that differentiates them from others.

Hospitality

The Druze are famous for their hospitality. This is a basic trait inherent in them since their childhood to death. The Druze house is specially built for guests. The central part in it is the big and there is spacious guest room. All other parts are less important. A guest is welcomed when he arrives, and he is treated as an important man. The host gives his guests all that he has. Not always the hosting people are wealthy, however, they offer their guests all they have, and they never hold back. The guest receives to be the first of everything, and he is the first to be served the food. When visiting friends or relatives he gets most of the attention and he is the first to enter and exit.

The Druze who lived in the Druze Mountain in Syria and Lebanon wasted lots of resources on their guests. During the First World War, when Syria and Lebanon suffered famine, the situation in the Druze Mountain was better, since they grew wheat there, and the crops were better. In those years tens of thousands of Christian and Muslim refugees came from Lebanon and Syria, lodged in the house of the Druze residents, ate and drank for many months, until they were able to return to their homes. It is said that Salim El Atrash, the mountain's leader in that period used to make a meal in his house every day and fed over 1000 people, according to the Druze and Oriental tradition. French clerks and their assistants took advantage, during the French mandate, of the Druze' good intentions and naivety, and their hospitality customs, and visited them so often, that they impoverish them. However, usually the tradition of hospitality was kept and followed in the whole East, and the Druze, who hosted local people also had an opportunity to lodge and to receive an adequate reward.

In the last years, since most Druze in the area became "western", they abandoned their old habits and became like everybody else.

Courage

The Druze are known as a brave and courageous people. Their courage came with time, when they were persecuted for generations, being mountain and distant villages people, since they believe in incarnation and do not fear death, and since they know that often they are right and the fight is enforced on them, and not initiated by them. All Druze wars were wars of few against many. Since their first days in Egypt the Druze had to repulse attacks

against them, by many factors. Some Druze gave up and abandoned the Druze faith. They became Christians or returned to the Sunni Islam, however most of them consistently and persistently kept their ways. The Druze fought alongside the Muslim forces against the Crusaders, the Tatars, the French and all other intruders. Every external foe that did not wish to fight the Druze asked for their proximity and assistance, since they were known as great warriors. Druze officers performed the common revolutions in Syria, the Druze in Syria initiated the revolt against the French, and a Druze leader carried out the independence declaration in Lebanon. The Druze were the only ones in the area who were not defeated by the Egyptian invader, Ibrahim Pasha, when he occupied Syria in 1831.

The ethics toward women

Most of the Druze population was, in the past, a religious population that influenced also the non religious, and dictated to them ways of behaviour, according to its spirit. The Druze religion includes a severe prohibition to touch a woman. A Druze men is perceived as a sinner for the very thought of touching a woman. An adulterous Druze, just like a murderer, is punished for the rest of his life and does not have a right to be included in the first rank of religious figures.

In the many wars the Druze held for thousand years they never hurt or harmed women. As for their enemies- once they had an opportunity, they raped and killed Druze women. Even in these cases, the Druze did not harm the wives and women of their enemies and maintained respect. Western military commanders, observers, diplomats and historians, speak of the high morality and ethics of the Druze warriors. These warriors fight their male adversaries, and the minute they surrender or cease fighting, their women, children and old men receive the protection of the Druze, and are looked after, as if they were their wives and family members. Here, too, many Druze were used in a non- proper manner. Their enemies were familiar with their characteristics and they were used by some against them. Despite this, the Druze, even today, are noble and are above the despicable behaviours of many other people.

Assistance to persecuted

The Druze settlements and villages were known as shelters for the persecuted and helpless. Everyone persecuted by authorities or by a certain tribe, or by any other element, knew that if he turned to a Druze leader he would find a shelter in his home and would be safe from danger, until the issue is settled. A Druze that is asked to help somebody automatically becomes responsible for his safety. He defends him, supplies him with food and beverages, and a place to sleep, and tries to solve the problem. Many Druze leaders initiated wars or clashes with others simply because of they were asked to defend people and refugees. A famous case is the case of the refugee Adham Khanger, who found shelter in Sultan El Atrash's home. The French authorities came when Sultan was not present and arrested the refugee, and then Sultan initiated a revolt against them. Even here the Druze tend to be fanatic and extreme in their fanaticism and their tendency to act according to customs. Someone can murder somebody, but when he asks for assistance and shelter in the house of the brother or relative of the murdered man, he receives protection.

The Druze mountain in Syria absorbed, throughout the years, thousands of refugees who escaped because of their fear to be recruited to the Ottoman army, or for other reasons. Druze leaders in Israel paid with their lives when they acted according to this commandment.

Resolving family disputes

Unfortunately, there are cases of murder within the Druze society. These are few, however they exist, but there is a regular and accepted team of leaders who resolve the problem, find compromise between the fighting parties and prevent additional violence. When a murder occurs, a group of leaders initiates armistice between the murderer's and the victim's families. Usually the murderer's family leaves the village immediately and moves to a distant place. The armistice lasts for about 40 days. During this period the victim's family is not allowed to make any move or take revenge. During this period there are intensive discussions, whose aim is to make peace and forgiveness between the two parties. When an agreement is reached, the peace-making committee invites the two parties to a ceremony called "the flag tying". Many people are invited to this ceremony. Thousands of people are gathered

in a big place, to witness the peacemaking. The committee summarizes the conditions that were agreed by the two parties, declares them, and the most senior person in the public takes a wooden rod and ties a peace of fabric to it. The murderer or his family member takes this rod and turns to all family members of the person he killed, and each of them ties this piece of fabric. Other distinguished people and representatives of the government also take part in this ceremony, as witnesses of the peacemaking act. It is usually agreed that the murderer's family pays a high sum of money to the other family, however the family usually refuses to accept it. All present greet the agreement, praise the family members of the victim for deciding to avoid bloodshed, and wish them well. Through this act the Druze society prevented and neutralized many murders and acts of revenge, and there was no need to turn to civilian courts.

Marriages

Today Druze marry just like all other youth in the western societies around the world. The young males and females meet in high schools, university or at work, get to know each other, fall in love and agree to get married. They pronounce their attentions to their families, and the latter make all arrangements for the marriage ceremony that takes place in a hall or in the groom's house. But, in the past it was altogether different, and was more interesting and colourful. In the past, the acquaintanceship was introduced by others. A young man who was interested in a certain woman, sent her messages through his sister or a friend and discussed marriages with her. He told his parents and they turned to the woman's parents and asked them for permission. If her parents agreed, the engagement day was appointed. Engagements enable acquaintance between the boy, the girl and their parents. This lasted for several months, and than the wedding day is chosen. The wedding was a big event and lasted for several days. There were separate celebrations for the bride and for the groom. In the last day the bride was brought to the groom's house, in a festive parade. All village's inhabitants, and external guests, participated. All events were accompanied by dances. The marriages were a good opportunity for unification of society and breaking the routine of hard work. The young couple integrated in the

household and worked with the male head of family, usually in cultivating the soil or in growing cattle.

Burying ceremonies

The Druze adopted the most distinguished and beautiful ceremonies of burial and death in all the Middle East, and maybe the whole world. When somebody dies, almost all inhabitants of the village gather in his house or in a public place, used for this purpose. They support the mourners in this difficult time. The men and women gather separately, and the body of the deceased is near the women mourning in a separate place. At the time of the funeral all people gather, leave the gathering place and go to take the body from the place where the women are gathered. The family members and relatives enter inside, to see their beloved for the last time, and to say goodbye. He is put in a coffin and he is taken by youths to the cemetery, accompanied by big crowd. There all present stand (only men, since women are not allowed to be in a cemetery, due to social and religious reasons). The coffin is in the centre. The religious persons stand in front of the coffin and pray. Speeches are made and than the coffin is laid in the grave.

The mourning lasts for three days. The friends, acquaintances and the inhabitants of the near villages come to pay condolence to the family. One unique and nice Druze custom is that it is forbidden to offer food or anything else except for water throughout the mourning ceremonies. The wisdom in this custom is that a person can plan his date of wedding, house inauguration, or any other happy event, and may properly prepare for this, and than he should offer goods and other things. However, death is a sudden, unexpected event, and therefore families are incapable of preparing themselves to serve guests, and sometimes the less wealthy or poor families can find themselves embarrassed. Therefore the Druze custom prevented this embarrassment, by prohibiting the customs of hosting.

The family members, who mourn in their houses for three days or more, accept people coming to condolence. They receive the attention of friends and give neighbours, who prepare meals for them and look after the children during the mourning period.

Since the Druze believe in incarnation, they impart no importance to the human body. Usually the grave is not nurtured, and it is used for another burial after a few years. Sometimes all graves are opened and the whole

cemetery is reused. The Druze believe in re-incarnation, but they believe that this is done not through the resurrection of the body, but rather through the eternity of the soul, which replaces the body in each generation. Therefore, the Druze are not strict and consistent about maintaining memorial ceremonies, except for leaders or famous people, more becoming of a secular rather than religious need.

The Druze clothing

The Druze clothing has existed in the same form for decades. In the past all inhabitants were traditional and religious and wore the same dress for generations. Lately, there is separation between the religious and secular: the religious men kept wearing the traditional clothing, whereas the others adopted a European style of clothing. This clothing differs from the clothing of others, and it differentiates and characterizes the Druze. It is the same in Syria, Israel and Lebanon and is common only for the Druze. It is modest clothing, and covers the whole body. There are differences in the clothing of young and older women both in style and in colourfulness. As for men – both religious young men and older men wear the same cloths.

Women's clothing

Young women wear long dresses, made of velvet, silk or any other colourful fabric. They cover their head with a white covering. Their faces are visible. In the past young women wore hats, under the white covering. The hat was interwoven by golden coins. Today, however, they neglected this custom.

The clothing of older women is more complex and includes several parts:

- The robe: a long robe, covering the whole body, with long sleeves, opened in its front.
- The dress: A white long dress, which covers the whole body.
  A frontal coverage covering the part that is not covered by the robe, and its colour usually resembles that of the robe.

- White simple head coverage, covering the whole head and the face, except the eyes, nose and mouth.

Older women usually wear dark cloths; younger women wear more bright and varied colours.

It is forbidden in the religious society for women to wear trousers or short dresses with low necklines.

Men's clothing

Young men wear common European clothes. Only religious men and older people wear the traditional Druze clothes. The religious men see it as a must, at least during prayers. It is consists of the following items:
The white turban on the head: A red fez, originated in ancient Turkey, around which they tie a white piece of fabric. There are two types of turban: the regular, which all Druze religious men wear, and the round, and only a few wear it symbolises a particularly high level of proficiency, knowledge and the capacity to interpret the mysteries of the Druze religion.

- The long robe: A strong fabric, covering the whole body, from the neck down to the feet, and tied well, so it actually wraps the complete body. This item is convenient for use, movement and sitting. It is usually black or blue.
- Special Oriental trousers: Made of a big piece of fabric enabling space of movement for the person wearing it. There is a supplementary part around the legs that enables the person to sit freely on the floor when needed, with his legs joined, or to freely stand. The colour is white, black or blue.
- A shirt: dark-tan shirt, closed in the neck.
- An upper coat: This is not a must. Only worn in bad weather or by people of high rank in official events.
- An external rob (Abaia): Characterizes men with high status when it is embroidered and decorated. Worn by traditional political leaders. Modest religious persons who keep simple appearance wear a simple rob, which only protects them from cold weather and in order to hide and conceal as much as possible from the body.

The Druze Flag

The Druze flag includes five colours. These colours symbolise and represent basic values and good traits in the Druze religion. It was designed when the Druze religion was established, and has stayed with the community throughout its life for thousand years. The colours are: green, red, yellow, blue and white. In the various countries in which Druze live they add the country's symbol to the flag. The French mandate in Syria divided the state to 5 small countries, including the Druze mountain state. The flag of this country was the five coloured Druze flag, in the upper right corner a small French flag and in the upper left corner 13 stars, symbolizing 13 regions that together compound the Druze mountain land. In Lebanon the Lebanon's cedar is painted on the flag, in Israel the Shield of David is painted. There are similar drawings in the United States, Australia and other countries.

The flag for the Druze is a religious tribal symbol rather than a political national symbol, since the Druze are not a separate, distinguished nationality, and they have no aspirations of establishing a state of their own state or political entity, due to their small numbers and the fact that they are spread in several countries, and since such an enterprise is not necessary to their existence.

In the past the Druze lived under the rule of the Ottoman Empire in a tribal mountain framework, under a defined and controversial religious identity. Their history is filled with wars, struggles, conflicts and clashes with hostile elements. The flag was important and necessary then as a mean of consolidation, unification, moral rising and the demonstration of power and presence. With time the warriors learned to relate to the flag as a kind of amulet and as a guarantee for victory and a symbol for hope, and an ideal that one should fight for. In the Druze Mountain the inhabitants were highly serious about the flag. Every village adopted its own flag with which it identified. They carried the flag with them to happy events, in conventions, fights and for any other public event. The man who carried the flag was usually a strong and brave man who understood the extent of responsibility that he represented. The warriors, when saw the flag lifted, felt strong and encouraged and continued fighting. Therefore, the flag was a marked goal for the enemies. They understood that in order to break the force it is necessary to, firstly, hit the flag. So, the flag became a goal in its own right. Throughout the Druze history a rich folklore of stories was created around the flag, the most familiar is the story of five brothers who

carried the flag in a fight in the Druze mountain, and were all killed during the fight. This story, told from one generation to another, and symbolized the willingness for sacrifice and the importance of the flag.

In the daily lives there is no much use for the flag, since there is no official political Druze entity. Therefore, it is not raised up and lifted over public institutions, except for in cases of communal events, when it is raised up.

The colours of the flag represent the following traits:

- **Green**: symbolizes the land, deep-rootedness, renewal, blossom, generosity, freshness, attentiveness and openness and optimism.
- **Red**: symbolizes power, safety and security, the flowing of life, eternity, pride and pioneering spirit.
- **Yellow**: symbolizes the sun, light, grains, energy and hit.
- **Blue**: symbolizes universality, the endless skies, the deep oceans, secrets of the universe and mysteries of creation.
- **White**: symbolizes purity, naivety, beginning, honesty, good intentions, youth and faith.

The five colours that compound the flag have an important role. They can be seen, in various variations, in all areas of life. Houses are painted in some of these colours, and they are used in decorations, medals, symbols, letters, slogans etc.

The Druze warrior in history

Many communities and nations have appeared throughout history, and were bigger in their number, and stronger than the Druze people, however they were eventually exterminated. They were persecuted for several reasons: religious, economical and political. Despite their low numbers and their primitive means, they succeeded to survive and to have a distinguished and honourable place in the history of the region's people. No doubt, their internal strength, consolidation, faith and adherence to objectives – highly contributed to their strong and firm survival throughout the years, but these can also be assigned to the characteristics and high proficiency of the Druze warrior. These warriors excelled, had a level of performance and highly believed in the rightness of the issue for which they fought. Until the 20^{th}

century the Druze lived in an almost tribal way of life and their way of fighting was the same, therefore they developed the means of security, such as fortresses, canals, watchtowers, etc. What characterized their way of fighting was the fortification in the heights of the mountains and in high sites, which are difficult to approach. Therefore, they did not have to construct artificial fortresses, but rather relied upon the topography of the site in which they settled. There are almost no Druze villages in lowland areas or near the sea. All villages are built on high mountains or in places difficult to approach. The nature of their living places, the constant danger they experienced and the difficult living conditions made them, from a very young age, to survive under a constant, permanent, struggle, and against nature and possible danger. They learned to ride at very young ages, to travel far, to transport construction materials and to work hard in order to grow crops on a mountainous and rocky soil. From this they developed a natural capability to overcome obstacles, to always be alert and ready to repel danger, and to keep the little they had. Up to the 20th century the Druze did not have an army in the classic sense, except for the time of Ameer Fakher El Din. Almost every man, from age 15 and beyond – was a potential soldier. In addition to the physical exercises aimed at training the soldiers, there was a very important factor in developing a defence strategy doctrine and fighting proficiency among adults and youths. The villages were small. Every evening the men of the village gathered in the wide Diwan, a big meeting room, in the middle of the village, with the local leader, to tell stories and to share memories. Those known as brave warriors talked about their bravery acts, while describing techniques and tactics. These warriors became admired figures and role models for the youths. It was only natural that every young man aspired to become a hero that speaks about his bravery and who is admired by the entire community. They heard the stories, reflected on them and waited for the right time to put them into practice for themselves. Add to this the high motivation to fight and to protect the women, children, house, village and community, and the result is strong, mighty warriors, not organized as a formal army but capable of uniting, obeying a certain leader and doing whatever they are told, while aiming at the target. This natural growth of the warrior was expressed by the integration of individual warriors into the group. A sudden attack on the Druze resulted in the spontaneous rise of a commander accepted by all, and whose authority was highly accepted, even though him and the group were not trained before. The alarm or recruitment method was primitive, yet efficient. When signs of a close danger were discovered, delegates stood at

the heights of mountains and shouted slogans that were determined ahead, while pointing out a meeting and gathering site. One of the European travellers that visited in the area in the 16th century points that in this way 15000 warriors could have gathered in three days. They used almost entirely cold weapons, and only few of them had the permission to carry guns. In the 19th century the Druze have fought the armies of the Ottoman Empire and the Egyptian intruder, Ibrahim Pasha. Their means were poor and lean, compared to the improved and state of the art weapon, held by their enemies. The numerical ratio was not in their favour, and timing was in the favour of the enemy. Despite all that they did not lose the fight and succeeded in defeating danger. The best evidence for the Druze's excellent military ability is the sayings of two of their most bitter enemies. The first is Ibrahim Pasha, the son of Muhammad Ali, who turned to the Druze commander, Shibli El Arian, who drove Ibrahim Pasha crazy, and he had to declare a 60000 pounds reward for the man who kills him: "If I had only two warriors like yourself, there would have been no army that could scare me...". The other was Mamduh Pasha, the commander of the Ottoman army, who was sent to fight the Druze in 1890. He said: "If I had such people I would have been an Emperor".

The only period in history in which the Druze people have constructed a kind of state was during the ruling of Ameer Fakher El Din. He was a governor on behalf of the Ottoman Empire, which ruled in all the Near East. He was a strong and enlightened governor. He maintained relations with western countries and brought to his ruling region progress, democracy and western techniques. He established a well-organized army, through which he has widened his ruling from his base in the Shouf mountains to Halab in the east and El Arish in the south. The Ottoman Empire had to gather its military strength in order to defeat the independent and enlightened governor. Another attempt to establish a kind of state was in 1921, when the authorities of French mandate divided Syria into six small states, including the Druze mountain state. This attempt has failed, since the Druze leadership objected to it. In the Druze revolt against the French mandate, in 1925, the military achievements were good. However, it failed, since it has not received the active support of the entire Syrian people and the Syrians were not willing to make the same sacrifices as the Druze people. The Druze were incapable of fighting on their own, and alone, for the independence of the Syrians. The most important fight during the revolt was the El Mazraa fight. In this fight a French force of 3000 soldiers participated. It was equipped with tanks, cannons, airplanes and light

weapons. A few hundreds of Druze warriors, under the commandment of Sultan El Atrash, surprised the force, siege it, and in a daring attack succeeded to penetrate it, while in the same time knocked out the planes, tanks and cannons, and made the soldiers fight just like them, with swords and bayonets. The Frenchmen got scared and were defeated, and this military force was terminated. The Druze paid a severe cost when suffering from 341 dead warriors. This battle was perceived by the Druze people as a brilliant fight, in which few warriors equipped with guns, swords and axes, succeeded in defeating a big and well-trained army force, which used tanks, cannons and airplanes. 60 years after the Druze revolt in Syria there were no events that enforced the Druze to fight as a group, except for the revolt against the Syrian tyrant, Adeeb Shishakly, in 1954, in which the Druze succeeded in dismissing him. The finest hour of the Druze warrior was in 1983, when, during the Lebanon war, the phalanx tried to exterminate the 1000 years of Druze existence in Lebanon and to banish the Druze. The Druze recruitment was total and the fight was heroic and efficient. The Druze, under the leading of Waleed Junblat, and with the support of Ameer Majeed Arselan and Sheikh Muhammad Abu Shakra, defeated the phalanx from the Shouf mountains and constructed a fortified Druze fort in which they ruled, while fully integrating in the Lebanon country that began to rehabilitate itself after the civil war, which lasted for over 15 years.

The Druze warrior in the Israel defence force received a good reputation, compliments and fame. Occasionally Druze warriors in Israel had to fight against Druze soldiers from Syria or Lebanon. The soldiers from the two sides realized that they might kill each other, however they had no sentiments, since they saw this as a destiny, and as something determined by God, and therefore, that they had no option but to fulfil their obligation and duty for their states, and if their destiny is to die, they willingly accept this, since they believe that if a person's destiny is to die, he will die anyhow. In opposite, the Druze soldiers that served in the west bank or in Gaza strip or in Lebanon during its occupation, or in the Syrian territories, occupied during the October war, behaved gently and not as a cruel conquering army. They fulfilled their military duties as best as possible, however, regarding the civilian population – they utilized their knowledge of the Arabic language, the fact that they have similar ways of life and customs in order to assist the population and to ease occupation.

Chapter Eleven

Holy places

The Druze faith includes many prophets and emissaries and saints. These holy men acted in the Druze settlements. Some of them died and were buried in the sites. Their burial sites became, with time, holy sites. Others just passed and visited a certain site or lived there and died in another site, and the site in which they lived for a certain period was considered holy. In Israel near almost every Druze village there is a holy site. In Syria and Lebanon there are less holy sites.

The Druze believers visit the holy sites throughout the year, especially in times of distress, in order to receive support and encouragement from the holy person. Some make vows at the holy site. For prophets and other holy men there is an annual holiday and a day of rest, related to the saint. This day is proclaimed as a holiday and there is a pilgrimage, including the summoning of the religious leader, discussion of the community's life, and prayers. These meetings create unification among members of community, develop the religious conscience and have an important role in keeping up tradition and customs. The holy places are usually maintained by the local authorities or by the Druze spiritual authority. In every such site there is an appointment of a person who lives in the site, with his family, and is in charge of keeping order, cleaning, renovations and everyday maintenance. Today this person receives his salary from the authority in charge, for his services, but in the past he would receive contributions of the believers and visitors, who made vows. Part of the payoff of the vow was made through a monetary or other contribution, given to the man in charge of the site. Since the Druze society is compounded of families that sometimes fight and quarrel, the holy sites near the villages were a neutral place for gathering and for celebrating common

events, and this enabled an activity that otherwise would not have taken place. In the past, when the transport was difficult, the holy sites were a sleeping place for the pilgrimages and shelter for travellers, homeless persons or persecuted people.

Almost all holy sited are connected to prophets or emissaries. However there are two famous sites that are different, and still attract many Druze: the praying houses near the town Hasbaia, Hilwat El Biada and El Hakim's mosque in Cairo.

Hilwat El Biada

El Biada is the name of a hill south to the Hasbaia town in South Lebanon, in which, 400 years ago, was the sites of the praying houses that became, with time, a non-formal house of study for studying the Druze religion. Sheikhs and educated people used to settle there, and this place attracted pupils from Syria, Lebanon and Israel. They stayed there for months and studied the fundamentals of the Druze religion. From there they returned to their villages as qualified people. They received no documents, since it was not a formal place, and the study was not systematic. However the identifying mark was that the graduate, who studied by heart all the Druze religion books, "six thick books", was recognized as a graduate and he was given a special garment, which points of him as reaching a certain status in understanding the Druze faith. Usually the pupils succeeded in this mission, since everyone who came to El Biada knew what had to be done if he felt, for any reason, incapable of facing it – he would not have gone to El Biada from the beginning.

With time the place received reputation and importance. Wealthy Druze religious men built there praying places, carrying their names. They also constructed a number of praying houses that absorbed all pupils in the "burning season", especially during the summer. Through time the place acquired reputation and central importance in the Druze religious life. Important religious decisions were made there, in conventions and meetings, and it became a place of consultation of all Sheikhs, in order to be inspired by it and to do what had to be done. The site is located in Wadi El Tim area, not far from the original sites, where the first Druze believers' roots were.

The persons in charge of the site came from the town Hasbaia. As a result of the existence of this site in the area there was the development of important religious leaders, who became famous and took part in many issues, such as religious interpretation, personal example and exemplary acts.

El Hakim's mosque

This is the mosque where the Druze faith originated, in the beginning of the 11th century. It was constructed by the Fatimic Caliph El Hakim, and during his time the Druze faith developed. The construction of the mosque was completed in 1012, and in it all activity concerning the foundation of the faith took place. The mosque was built outside the walls of Cairo, and when the city widened, other walls were constructed. This is one of the biggest mosques in the world in size. It is 120 meters long, 113 meters wide. It includes two unique turrets, and it can hold tens of thousands of people in the same time. The mosque had a crucial role to play when the faith was established. However it was abandoned in later periods until, recently, it received a special treatment by a Muslim sect living in India: El Bahara. These are Ishmaelites believing in the Fatimic Caliphs, and especially El Hakim. They received permission from the Egyptian authorities to rehabilitate the mosque and to restore it. The mosque is a pilgrimage site for many Druze arriving to Cairo, from elsewhere. Since it is a mosque they enter it, pray and leave. There is no activity in it, that characterizes other holy places, and there is no one in charge. Administratively it belongs to the Egyptian antiquity authority, which looks after maintenance of the site today.

Itro's grave

It is a holy site, very important for the Druze. It is located in Hittin, Near Tiberias, in Israel. According to tradition the grave of prophet Shuaieb (Jethro) is there. For centuries this site consisted of one small room, and in it the grave, and upon it a dome. Many travellers, from the 11th century,

visited there and spoke about it as a pilgrimage site. It was built and renovated by Sultan Salah El Din El Ayubi, who defeated the Crusaders in 1187, in the Hittin fight. The Druze used to visit the place through the whole year and to stay there for a few days, since it is a distance from the Druze villages. In 1882 the place was renovated and new sections were built, in order to receive and welcome visitors, and to make their stay more comfortable. The local Druze leadership inaugurated it in 25th of April, 1883, and ever since – this day is an official holiday. On this day the Druze gather in the site, make discussions, pray and stay for one day or more. In the past celebrations included dancing and singing. However today there are only prayers and discussions.

The prophet Zevulun's site

This site is near the village Hurfaish in the upper Galilee, over the Peak of the Zevulun Mountain, which is 880M high. There is no grave in the site, but rather a cave hewn in the rock in which the prophet Zevulun used to isolate himself and pray. It is not known when the prophet lived, and there is little information about him, but for the local people he appears as an ascetic who lived in the top of the mountain and assisted the neighbours, the sick and all people who needed help. Centuries ago a room was built over the cave. With time other rooms were constructed, and the result was the establishment of a large building that included many structures enabling visitors to stay several days. The Druze spiritual authority decided that September 10th each year is the prophet Zevulun's holiday. This is a day of rest in the Druze villages and there is a mass pilgrimage to the site, on that day.

El Ameer El Sayed's site

This is one of the most important places in the Druze' religious lives. El Ameer El Sayed was a religious person, highly admired, and therefore receives the affection and sympathy of the believers. He was born, lived and died in the town Abai, in the Shuff Mountains. When he was old he gave the order to make his house after his death and that of his wife a public place

and a praying site. When he died he was buried at home and the place became a holy site. Around it a praying hall and small rooms were constructed, and later the Druze orphanage house was built next to it, and with time it became a wonderful school. During the Civilians the Maronites, who brutally destroyed the house and the grave, conquered war between the Druze and the Maronites in Lebanon the town. However, a few months later the Druze returned and reconstructed the house.

Jesus' temple

The Druze believe in Jesus as one of the prophets of the global unity-of-God religion. According to the Druze belief, Jesus arrived also to the Druze Mountain and held a meeting there with some of his pupils and supporters in the area. In the meeting place, above a high hill, over looking wide areas in the Druze Mountain, a temple like a big palace was built. The building is compounded of a structure, and upon it a series of arcs, and above all them a high dome. The local Druze visit the temple during all days of the year for regular meetings.

Prophet Ayub's temple

Prophet Ayub is one of the most admired figures in the Druze faith. His suffering is a symbol and example, and a source of admiration. A large construction was built in his memory in the Shouf Mountains, on the top of a mountain 1400 meters high. This construction is of twenty rooms, and there are evidences for the date of construction of the first building.

The Druze in Lebanon foster the site, visit it each year, in July, there is a mass gathering including religious figures.

Shemlikh temple

This is the name of a mountain in the Maten area in Lebanon, north to the Beirut-Damascus road. At this site a temple was built in memory of the visit

of one of the central figures in the Druze community, Baha El Din. He was one of the five main establishers of the Druze faith and the one who carried all the responsibility after the disappearance of El Hakim. He visited Shemlikh in 1024, before the disappearance. He came in a secret and important mission. On his way from Egypt to Halab and Damascus, and back, Baha El Din visited several places and stayed there, therefore there are also other sites in which temples were built to his memory.

Chapter Twelve

Druze Leaders

El Ameer El Sayed

El Ameer El Sayed (the master- prince) Jamal El-Din Abbdalla El Tanukhi (1417-1479) was the biggest Druze theologian in the thousand years of the existence of the Druze belief, after the generation of the first prophets and emissaries. His religious acts were so important and distinguished that today he is admired and receives the status of almost a holy man. He is a member of the big Tanukh family, a huge tribe that emigrated from the Arab peninsula to Iraq, then to Syria and then to Lebanon. The Tanukh family adopted Druze religion in the beginning of the 11th century, and ruled in Lebanon until 1516, when the area was conquered by the Ottomans, and assigned rule to another Druze family, the Ma'an family.

El Ameer El Sayed was very religious, from his adolescence. He loved to study the religious beliefs and fundamentals and was interested in both foundations of the religion and secular issues. He studied several years in Damascus and was taught by the most educated and scholars of his time. His acts can be summarised under three main enterprises:

1. He determined and formed the framework of the Druze belief: the religion, which was established in the beginning of the 11th century, which had gone through fundamental changes during over 400 years, and undesired additions were added to it, due to the secrecy of religion and the persecution of believers.
   El Ameer El Sayed has reset and reassessed the foundations of belief, filtered and screened it, removed the additions that were stuck to it in a later phase and redefined it, based on documents, certificates and evidences that he sided.
2. He wrote a comprehensive interpretation of the Druze belief. After determining its framework in six basic books that included the

principles of belief as determined in the beginning of the 11th century, he wrote a number of books, interpreting the belief.

3. He determined the "Do" and "Not Do" commands. He has wrote a kind of constitution, based on the religious books, including the behaviour of believers in the everyday life, in prayers, in eating, drinking, in marriage issues, divorce issues, death, heritage, trade, employment, common lives and nearly all walks of life. This constitution is' today, a reference for all Druze believers.

El Ameer El Sayed was born in Lebanon and lived, in Abai town, in the Shuff Mountains. In his life he was an example and model, and there is a certain act of heroism related to him. In the wedding day of his only son, when many important and respected people came, from all over, a disaster has occurred. His son entered the stable, and he was kicked by a horse, and died as a result. El Ameer El Sayed concealed the event and the death from the guests, followed all hospitality and ceremony rules, but before the guests left he announced them of what has happened and asked them to participate in the son's funeral. This has become a myth and a great heroic event. The Ameer's grave is in Abai and it is a holy place and a pilgrimage site for all Druze.

El Sheikh El Fadel (the benevolent Sheikh)

Sheikh Muhammed Abu Hilal (1578-1640), in the second-in-importance theologian after El Ameer El Sayed. Born in South Lebanon in She'ere village, near Wadi El – Teem, where, in the beginning of the 11th century, the Druze belief flourished and was rooted. El Sheikh El Fadel was born to a poor family, he became an orphan when he was a teenager and had to work as a shepherd. He had a strong tendency for studying and acquiring knowledge. While shepherding, he took with him a wooden board and when he encountered a person who knew how to read and write he asked him to write for him a few letters or words, until he learned the language for himself. When he got older he went to Damascus and studied there. When he completed his knowledge of the Arab language he decided to concentrate on the secrets of the Druze belief. He studied all books by heart, as appropriate to the most religious men, and also wrote praising songs to God and the prophets, wrote sermons, interpretations and thoughts. He was well known in his religious, diligence and for his ascetic character and was

famous for these traits. Senior rulers asked him to stay with them, however he preferred to stay in the mountains and to study religion. In his life he was a model and symbol of the character of the Druze religious man, as perceived by the faith. He established and conducted the norms of life and behaviour and moral rules that still exist and are followed today. He established the way the Druze religious men dress and when he died he ordered to bury him in a field that is plowed each year, to ensure that there will be no evidence of his grave. From then on, the Druze are not strict in their burying ceremonies, since they truly believe in the idea of reincarnation, and that the body has no value.

Sheikh Ali El Fares

Sheikh Ali El Fares was religious man (1707-1753), born in Yarka in the western Galilee. As a child he suffered from poverty, but he was anxious to study the Druze religion secrets. He became close to religious men and served them, and they taught him the secrets of religion. When he grew up he also learned to read and write and decided to live alone in the mountains, in a cave and to dedicate his time to study and memorize the religious texts. He maintained close relations with members of Tariff family and with Julis village. Sheikh Muhammad Tariff came every day to the cave, in which Sheikh Ali lived and prayed, and brought him food, drinks and clothing. After a while Sheikh Ali decided to leave the cave and to move to Julis, to live in the Tariff house.

He deepened his religious knowledge and became famous amongst the Druze population in Israel. He made educational visits to Damascus, and visited the praying houses in El Biada, in South Lebanon, and met the biggest, most famous religious figures in Lebanon.

Sheikh Ali El Fares is known, in the Druze legacy, as a poet who composed religious poems and songs, which are called and sang in every meeting of the religious Sheiks.

Sheikh Amin Tariff

Sheikh Amin Tariff was spiritual leader of the congregation in Israel (1898-1993). Born in the village Julis in the Galilee. His father was the spiritual head of community in Israel, a role that was transferred in the family for generations. Sheikh Amin first studied in his village and was taught by a local teacher, as well as in school in Rama village. When he learned to read and write he studied the Druze religious books and when he was older, he was sent to the college for the Druze religion studies near Hasbaia, in South Lebanon, "Hilwat El Biada". He studied there with some young people from other villages in Israel. He was famous for his diligence, seriousness and proficiency. He completed his studies and returned to his village, to assist his father in managing the issues of the community. His father died in 1928 and he received the religious rule. He was quite mature, experienced, well versed and proficient in the mysteries of faith and had the relevant knowledge in public relations manners, and these enabled him to carry the burden of such role under the conditions of mandate, political instability, and bad and tensed relations between Arabs and Jews in Israel.

In the beginning of the Thirties he experienced resistance from liberal circles in community, however he overcame this resistance. In 1930 he received the recognition of the big Lebanese sheiks in a religious ceremony near the grave of the prophet Aiub, in the Shuff mountains. In this ceremony the Sheiks gave him the white round turban, which symbolizes proficiency in the mysteries and secrets of religion. Few such people in every generation receive the white round turban. From then, no one undermined his leadership. Sheikh Amin succeeded in navigating the Druze community through the harsh storms of the Thirties and Forties .He supported the establishment of the state of Israel and kept his people in their villages and made sure that they would not become refugees.

After the state was established he built communal institutions and special courts for rights of matrimony. He was famous and known as a religious and public figure. In 1983, when the borders between Israel and Lebanon opened, he was accepted in respect as the most important Druze religious figure of his time.

When he died, he was honoured by the greatest, biggest Druze funeral ever, with the participation of hundreds of thousands of mourners.

Sultan El Atrash

Sultan El Atrash was Syrian military leader (1891-1982). Born in Kraya village near the capital Swaida, in the Druze Mountain in Syria, to El Atrash family, the leaders of the Druze in the mountain. His father was a military warrior who fought against the Ottoman authorities and was executed in 1911 in Damascus. Sultan El Atrash followed his father's way and attempted, from time to time, to attack the Ottomans and stop them recruiting the young Druze in the mountain to the army, or to unarm, or to lay more taxes. When he was young he learned how to hold a weapon, to ride a horse and to lead youngsters. He participated in a number of fights and military journeys and was distinguished as a clever, rigid and decisive leader.

During world war one he fought the Ottomans, joined the big Arabian revolt of Shereef Husin and was among the conquerors and releasers of Damascus, in the hope to win independence. When the French mandate was enforced on Syria, the French police commanders acted cruelly toward the Druze population. Therefore, Sultan El Atrash proclaimed, in 1925, a general revolt in Syria, when the purpose was to release it from the French rule and to achieve independence. The revolt included all of Syria, and the Sultan was the general commander. It lasted for two years, but not all forces that participated in it lasted and endured. Sultan was left alone with his men, the revolt failed and was exiled to Jordan. This banishment lasted for ten years. Sultan returned and no longer mixed and intervened in the political or military lives. When Syria received its independence, in 1946, Sultan could have been appointed to whatever role he desired, but he preferred to live a traditional family life in his village.

In 1954 Sultan led a Druze revolt against the Syrian dictator Adeeb Shishakly, who bombed the villages of the Druze Mountain by airplanes. The revolt succeeded and the tyrant escaped from Syria. Sultan supported the unification between Syria and Egypt in 1958. President Jamal Abdol Nasser visited him in his home as an expression of gratitude and acknowledgment in his acts for the purpose of Arab unification. Nasser has cancelled all honour titles in Egypt and Syria, except for the title of Sultan, Pasha.

In his last years Sultan became a religious man. He focused on conflicts resolution and local problems and did not intervene in political moves in Damascus.

Kamal Junblat

Kamal Junblat was Lebanese political leader (1917-1977). Considered as the most important Druze man in the 20th century. Born in the family palace in El Mukhtara in the Shuff mountains, an offspring of a noble Druze family that had important influence for over last 200 years. His father, Fuad Junblat, a famous leader, was murdered when he was a small child. The leadership was transferred to the mother, Nad'eera Junblat, as well as the responsibility for educating him. He studied in a famous boarding school in the area and when graduated from High School he was sent to Paris, to study law in the Sorbonne. According to his mother's will he studied law, and according to his own preference he studied sciences, philosophy and psychology, and received degrees in all of these. He worked as a lawyer for about a year and immediately, at the age of 25, he was called to partake in a political activity. His cousin, Hikmat Junblat, member of the parliament under the nomination of the county and family, died, and the assignment has passed to young Kamal. He participated in the 1943 elections and became a member of the parliament and had a chance to begin his political life. He was nominated a minister in various Lebanese governments, until he was murdered in 1977. In 1949 he established the progressive socialist party, which included both Druze and non- Druze circles and became a great success in the internal lives and in the inter Arab and international relations. Junblat was a close friend of Nasser and the leaders of the Soviet Union. He received the Lenin decoration for peace in 1964. He was a real socialist, took care of the workers and the party members and divided the assets of the family among farmers in the Shuff area.

Junblat also had another side: the spiritual, intellectual side. He was very interested in the Druze faith, studied it deeply, and tried to trace the relation between it and the beliefs in the Far East, especially in India. He went to India several times and met religious men there. He discovered Druze religious books that were not known and have since lit the imagination of thousands young Druze everywhere. He built himself a praying place near his village and used to go alone, spend time there one day a week, studying religious books and thinking about the destiny of human beings and the universe.

Junblat was also a writer, a poet and a philosopher. He wrote thousands of essays and many books about various issues in Arabic and French, which reflected on his political activity and his attitude and outlook toward the future of Lebanon and the Arab world.

Junblat was not a local leader, but popular and honoured all around the Arab world. He earned a national reputation and gave the small Druze congregation real prestige.

His assassination in 1977 put to an end a bright political, spiritual and literary career of a great man.

Rasheed Taleea'

Rasheed Taleea' was Lebanese leader (1876-1926) who established the first government in the Jordan kingdom and led it. He was one of the leaders of the Druze revolt in Syria in 1925.

He was born in Judaide village, in the Shuff mountains, studied in the Druze High School in Abai and later in a college in Beirut. Since he was a distinctive and excellent student he was sent to Constantinople, to study in its universities. When he completed his studies he was appointed to many roles, amongst them governor and district officer. In 1914 he was appointed by the Druze Mountain in Syria as a member of the Ottoman parliament. During the Arab rule in Syria he was the governor of Tripoli district. Ameer Faisel appointed him a member of his first government. With the French occupation and the application of the mandate, Rasheed Taleea' settled in the Druze mountain and had no official role, until he was called, by Ameer Abdalla, in 1921, to assemble and head the first government of the Jordan kingdom. The Englishmen, who ruled in the kingdom in this period, were not satisfied with the attitudes of Rasheed Taleea'. The Ameer Abdalla was dependent upon money and political support from the Englishmen and was unable to face the pressures. Taleea' realized that his attitudes cause the Englishmen a feeling of unease and did not wish to embarrass the Ameer Abdalla. Therefore, he resigned and left Jordan and stayed in Egypt along with other Syrian and Lebanese political exiles.

In 1925, when he found out about the outburst of the Druze revolt, under the leadership of Sultan El Atrash, he turned to the Druze Mountain in order to join the revolt and be one of its leaders. He only participated in a few moves and struggles, since he became ill and died, in the end of September, on the border of the desert.

Shakib Arslan

Shakib Arslan was Lebanese politician, philosopher and poet (1869-1946). He was born in Shuifat and studied Arabic, French and Turkish in Beirut. In Constantinople he studied in an Islamic college religious subjects, and in another college he studied the German language. He succeeded in all his studies and was welcomed in the high societies in Constantinople and became acquainted with all the famous figures. He moved to Egypt and there met and associated with the biggest most famous writers and politicians. The same is true for Syria. Later he moved to Paris, Tripoli and other places.

In 1913 the Druze Mountains as a member of the Ottoman parliament nominated him. The Sultan to assignments in Mecca and Palestine sent him. In the last months of the First World War he was sent to a political assignment in Berlin. He stayed there for a while and established the Arab club. In 1921 the Syrian-Palestinian congress was established in Geneva. Shakib Arslan was appointed as his secretary. Ever since, he stayed in Europe all his life and worked for the solution of the Palestine problem, the problem of releasing the Arab countries from the mandate, theological problems of Islam, issues of tradition etc. He maintained connections with very important figures in the Arab world, in areas of literature, poetry, art, politics, public relations, and so on. Every Arab delegation that arrived at Europe for some official meeting asked him to join and to be a part of its membership, in order to present its issues or theme in front of the Europeans.

Ameer Shakib Arslan was also a fruitful poet and writer. He composed many books, thousands of essays were published in newspapers and he was used to send each year around 700 letters to his friends in the Islamic and Arab world. These letters included his belief and ideology regarding the many issues relevant to his time.

Aref El Nakadi

Aref El Nakafi was Lebanese lawyer (1887-1975). Born in Abai village in the Shuff Mountains. He studied in Beirut and Constantinople in Islamic institutions. Graduating from law school he was appointed a registrar in the

Lebanon's court of appeals. He performed many roles, including the general manager of the Syrian laws department; chairman of the Syrian parliament, and his last role was governor of the Druze Mountain. He retired in 1949 and then dedicated his time to assisting orphans. He established in Abai, his village, the Druze orphan house, and made it a glorious educational institution.

When working as the law minister he formulated Syria's constitution, which was accepted in 1946, when it received independence. In 1920 he was appointed member of the scientific academy in Damascus and in 1969 was nominated as member of the Iraq scientific academy.

Kasem Abu Ez El Din

A Lebanese doctor (1854-1928), born in Abadia village, in the Shuff Mountains and studied there. The governor of Lebanon noticed his excellence and sent him to study medicine in Constantinople. He graduated in 1882 and was appointed a doctor to the Ottoman army and a lecturer in medicine. He was sent to Mecca, the pilgrimage town, to examine the diseases that attacked the pilgrims. He succeeded to reduce the number of injuries from 30000 a year to 300. As a result of his success he was sent on similar assignments in Iraq, Kuwait, the black sea and Lebanon. He established the national council, whose centre was in Constantinople, in 1908. In 1909 he was in charge of all issues of health inside the Ottoman Empire.

He wrote a number of essays regarding health, which were totally new and innovative in his time.

Mrs. Hbus Arslan

Mrs. Hbus Arslan was Lebanese leader (1768-1824). Born in Shuifat town. Married the Ameer Abbas Arslan, who died a few years later. She replaced him in his role and led her people in pride, integrity, and with no feelings of inferiority.

She lived in the time of three strong governors in the area: El Jazzar in Acre, Bashir El Shihabi in Lebanon, and Bashir Junblat in the Shuff mountains. The last two were banished twice to Acre and Horan, by El Jazzar. In both times Mrs. Hbus came to El Jazzar, paid lots of money and released the two leaders. After a while, when Ameer Bashir El Shihabi grew stronger, he eliminated most Druze leaders, including princess Hbus, who did so much for him in the past.

Princess Hbus managed for 15 years all issues in her hegemony territory in an excellent manner, which surprised many men. Even the French poet Lamartine tells about her in his book "A journey in the East", and relates to all that she has done for the evil Ameer Bashir.

Halil Taki El Din

Halil Taki El Din was Lebanese diplomat and writer (1906-1987). Born in the town Baaklin in the Shouf Mountains. Studied laws. Appointed as the secretary of the Lebanese parliament, which was then made from two houses. He integrated them into one house. He became a member of the Lebanese diplomatic staff in 1946, and for 24 years he was the Lebanese ambassador in U.S.S.R, Finland, Sweden, Norway, Mexico, Guatemala, Salvador, Honduras, Nicaragua, Costa-Rica, Egypt, Libya, Sudan, Turkey and England.

He was a fruitful writer, wrote short stories and published seven books.

Saleh Ben Yehya

Saleh Ben Yehya was Druze historian who lived in Lebanon, in the 15th century. He was a member of the famous Tanukh family, and participated in many fights and military marches, including the march for the conquest of the Cyprus Island in 1425. Lebanon was then ruled by the Mamluks in Egypt. This march ensured an Egyptian rule in the island.

Saleh Ben yehya became famous due to his important essay "The annals of Beirut". In this book he reviews 300 years of the history of Beirut, especially the actions of the Tanukh house in Lebanon. Considering the

writer's status and his way of writing, the essay was considered an authentic and real document, reflecting that period.

Naife Junblat

Naife Junblat was Lebanese leader (1810-1880), who was born in the village Mukhtara in the Shuff Mountains. She married Amin Shams, the leader of Druze in Hasbaia area, in South Lebanon. Her husband died when she was 30 years old, and she had three daughters. She refused to remarry and decided to take over her husband's role as a leader. Since both her father and husband were leaders, she was familiar with all rules of leading, ceremonies and the protocol. She received lots of affection and was liked by all, assisted the poor and those in need and her influence penetrated all realms and issues. She assisted financially people and governors in the Druze mountain in Horan and Lebanon, built praying houses, reinforced existing connections and built watering canals for the farmers. All of this was sponsored by her own money.

She received most of her publicity through her noble behaviour in the 1860 events, between the Maronites and Druze. The Ottomans killed Christians and blamed the Druze for this. Mrs. Naife saved hundreds of Christians from the Ottoman and offered them shelter and protection in her palace.

Khalil Khader

A general in the Philippine army (1913-1968) was born in Lebanon in Baaklin town. He studied in the American university in Beirut and travelled to the Philippines in 1937 where he studied industrial Chemistry. Worked in "Egozan" company for gold searching. When the Second World War began, he waas recruited to the Philippine army and was promoted to the military rank of a general. The Philippines tell about his great heroism in the war against the Japanese conqueror. When the war ended, he received the title "lion of the Wadi". He received many decorations from the Philippine government and was recognized as a war hero. In 1964 he retired and

elected as president of the Philippine warriors association. In 1962 the Philippine congress held a special meeting as a gratitude to Khalil Khader. He died and was buried there.

Jita Sumar Raja Bal

Jita Sumar Raja Bal was Indian leader who lived in the Indian city Malatan in the beginning of the 11^{th} century. He was one of the central pillars of the Druze faith there. The religious books tell of a wide correspondence between the emissary Bahaa El Din and Sumar Raja Bal. Regarding faith and believers. From the correspondence it appears that the Druze faith rooted and flourished in India. When the establishment period ended the connections between Druze in the Middle East and the believers in India, who in the past-accepted religion, were disconnected. Kamal Junblat and others, to renew the torch between the two communities, made renewed efforts, in the 20th century.

Shawkat Shakir

Shawkat Shakir was Syrian general (1912-1972), born in Lebanon in the village Arson. He studied at first in the church's institutions, and in military schools. He served as an officer in the Lebanese army and joined the Syrian army in 1949, as a military adjutant of the president of the republic. In 1953 he was promoted to the military rank of a general and appointed as the Syrian army's Chief of Staff. He continued in this role until 1956.

He was a brilliant military man and highly responsible. He assisted the Druze forces in the civilian war in 1975.

Najib Salha

A Lebanese manufacturer (1908-1980) was born in the village Ras El Matn. He studied in Beirut and Worked in various jobs in Sudan and Saudi. In Saudi he was appointed the deputy of the minister of finance and public

works and was in charge of making agreements between Saudi and the oil companies. He returned to Lebanon in the beginning of the Sixties. In 1962 he was elected to the parliament and assigned as the minister of design.

He was a successful and shrewd businessman. He owned a few companies, a big hotel company, a trading and industry company, Publicity Company, banks and developments and investments companies.

Afifa Saa'b

Afifa Saa'b was Lebanese writer (1900-1980), born in Shuifat and studied there. She began her career as a writer for Arab and international journals. She travelled to the United States when she completed her studies. Published a journal dealing with women issues, in 1919, and was one of the feminist pioneers in the Arab world. In 1925 she established a private school, which became a highly important and famous educational institution. She devoted her all life to education and to journalism and literary writing. She was given a special status in the contemporary Arab literature world.

Princess Nasab

Princess Nasab was Lebanese princess (1546-1633). She was the mother of Ameer Fakher El Din the great, who ruled in Lebanon between 1585 and 1635. The wife of Ameer Karkamaz, who ruled before his son, Fakher El Din. Her origin was the Tanukh family, who ruled in Lebanon for 400 years. Her husband died in 1585 and left her responsible for two small children. In the period between her husband's death and her son's rule, which lasted for seven years, she managed all governmental issues in the region that was under the rule of her husband, on behalf of the Ottoman Empire. She took care of the citizen's issues, negotiated her connections with the religious men, maintained good relations with the Ottoman governors, and succeeded to "walk between the drops" to keep the rule for her son, who had to wait until he reached the right age. Fakher El Din highly respected her and

consulted her in all his moves, and received her blessing and confirmation for all his acts.

Marzuk Mua'di

Marzuk Mua'di was leader from the Galilee (died in 1838), who was born in Yarka village as a member of the Mua'di family, who had great influence in the Western Galilee for generations. Sheikh Marzuk lived in the beginning of the 19^{th} century, in the era of El Jazzar, the governor of Acre, and Abdalla Pasha and Suleiman Pasha, who replaced him. Marzuk maintained friendly relations with Abdalla and received from him the authority to rule the whole area between Acre and Tiberias. This ruling meant collecting taxes for the authorities, resolving local conflicts, judging, keeping the trade convoys, etc. Marzuk handled this successfully. When the Egyptian Ibrahim Pasha conquered the area he expropriated Marzuk's rights and caused his murder.

Sheikh Marzuk, in 1825, collected the corps of Sheikh Bashir Junblat and Sheikh Amin El Emad, who were hung by the Acre governor, and buried them in Yarka, his village.

Farid Zin El Din

A Syrian diplomat (1907-1973) was born in Ein Kinia in the Shuff Mountains. He studied in the American University in Beirut and in Berlin and became a Doctor of laws. In the beginning he worked as a lawyer. In 1937 he was appointed as the general manager of the Syrian foreign ministry. In 1945 he represented Syria in a committee that was responsible for the establishment of the United Nations Organization, and was one of the formulators of the basic constitution of the United Nations. He represented Syria in the United Nations several times and published a number of constitutional and political essays.

Nadira Zin El Din

An author and feminist activist (1907-1976), she was born in Constantinople, where her father worked in a high judicial role. She studied in a school in Beirut and tried to be accepted to Beirut's University, to study medicine, but was rejected, since she was a woman. She rebelled against the phenomenon, according to which women can not study medicine. In her society there were many cases in which women refused to be examined by male doctors, therefore there was need for female doctors.

Nadira devoted herself to a struggle for achieving rights for women. She established a femininist organization, which evolved and developed with time, until it became the number-one female organization in Lebanon. In 1928 she wrote a revolutionary book, "The uncovering and covering of the face", which opposed and criticized the custom according to which women had to conceal her face from strangers. This book won both supportive and furious reactions from the biggest Arab philosophers. However, it was, no doubt, an important step in the emancipation of the Arab women.

Iben Sabat

A Lebanese historian (died in 1520) he was born and lived in Abai town. His father was one of the friends and pupils of El Ameer El Sayed and had a high status in the community. Iben Sabat composed a historical book beginning in 1132 and ending in 1520, in which he pointed universal historical events, and he also included many details on Lebanon, on the rule of the Tanukh family and the events he was familiar with and that were close to him. This book is an important source for learning about the period.

Daud Salim

A Lebanese scientist (died in 1913) he was born in Abai. He studied medicine in the American University in Beirut, graduated in 1884 and worked as a surgical doctor in the hospital near the University. He immigrated to Canada and succeeded very well in medical research. His

name appears in the American medical encyclopedia. He performed research on electricity, which was than in its very beginning. He made some inventions on electricity, which were a basis for the rapid development of domestic electric tools. He was to first to claim that trains can be operated by electricity instead of coal. He died young, from a heart attack.

Samir Sha'ar

A Lebanese scientist and inventor (1934-1976) he was born in Einab village in the Shuff Mountains. He studied technology and immigrated to the United States and studied sciences in California University. He was hurt in one of his kidneys, and invented the artificial kidney, and this was the topic of his doctorate thesis. He also invented the artificial heart. Later he worked as a special consultant in a firm that was constructing jet planes. He died young.

Hani Abu El Hasan

Hani Abu El Hasan was Lebanese musician, born in 1957 in the village Batchania, in the Shuff Mountains. He Studied Music in Cairo and lived in Vienna from 1979. He studied music composition and electronic music in the college of music and art in Vienna. He composes music that integrates oriental and western elements. He held, and still holds, concerts in Japan, United States, Europe, Australia, etc. He is very famous.

Ivon Abed El Baki

A Lebanese Artisan who lives in Ecuador. She was born in 1951 in the city Quakel. Her father was a Lebanese emigrant from the village Betater. She went to Paris in 1981, studied art in the American academy of Paris, and also studied in Kan, London and Germany. She writes poetry, paints, dances and plays. She held exhibitions in famous galleries around the world. She

received a worldwide publicity and recognition and she continues in her works.

Salame A'bid

A Syrian Professor (1921-1984), born in the city Swida, the capital of the Druze Mountain. He was the son of the national poet Ali A'bid, who was called "the poet of the big Druze revolt of 1925". His grandfather was the first mayor of Swida. He studied in Allai town in Lebanon. He practised teaching and studied in the American University in Beirut. He was in charge of the educational system in the Druze Mountain. He was elected to the Syrian parliament in 1960. In 1962 he was appointed an Arabic teacher in Bekin University, and was given the status of a professor. He published a number of researches, books and translations.

Farid El Atrash

He was a Musician (1914-1974). Born in the Druze Mountain. His mother was hunted by the French and had to move to Egypt with her sons Farid and Fuad, and their sister. He learned to play the lute when he was young. He began to sing in parties. The manager of Cairo radio in the middle of the Thirties discovered him, and he began to climb his way up to the top of the Arab charts, until his death. Today he is known as one of the biggest Arab singers and musicians.

Asmahan

Asmahan was singer (1912-1944). She was the sister of Farid El Atrash. Born on a ship that was sailing to Turkey, since her father was appointed as a governor there. She was killed in a tragic and mysterious car accident in Egypt, in a water canal.

She moved to Egypt with her mother and brothers. She was discovered and fostered by musicians. Her voice was unique in its nature and volume. She played in two movies and was starring in all radio stations. Her death is still a mystery and it was not yet revealed whether it was an accident or an intentional act.

Chapter Thirteen

Villages in Israel

Daliat El Carmel

Daliat el Carmel is the biggest Druze village in Israel. It is the most southern settlement in all Druze settlements in Israel and the Middle East, 20 kilometres East-South to Haifa, over the Carmel Mountain, in the central-western mountain area. It was probably established in the beginning of the 17th century, during the rule of Ameer Fakher El Din, from Beit Maa'n, around a holy site related with one of the Druze prophets, prophet Abu Ibrahim. The holy site still exists in the western area of the village, and is one of the most important sites of the Druze religion in Israel. The first inhabitants came from Lebanon and were among the Ameer's soldiers. Later their relatives and family members arrived, too. In 1711 there was a bloody internal fight between Druze' sections in Lebanon, and then other families also arrived, and settled in the village. In the beginning of the 10th century some families arrived from Syria, from Halab. The village Daila was one of 16 Druze villages in the Carmel established at that time. In 1839 the armies of Ibrahim Basha, the Egyptian leader, and the hostile Sunni environment attacked the villages. The inhabitants of all surrounding villages abandoned their villages and concentrated in the two villages, Dalia and Usfia. In 1840 a bloody struggle burst out between Dalia and the Muslim village, Ein Hod, due to the murder of a woman from the Muslim village. The inhabitants of Dalia were forced to temporarily leave their village and to move to Majdal shams, in the Golan Heights, where they found shelter. They stayed there for several months and returned after peace was made between the neighbours. Some of them remained there and even immigrated to the Druze Mountain, in Horan, and other inhabitants of the Golan came to Dalia, with

the inhabitants. In the middle of the Fifties of the 19th century there were about 300 inhabitants, according to one of the travellers. In 1882 the village received special attention when the Scottish writer, Sir Lawrence Olyphant, arrived and built his house there. Olyphant assisted the inhabitants and was assisted by them. Thanks to him the village was exposed to famous and distinguished figures from the West. Olyphant stayed in the village for two years and left after his wife's death. The house remained under the ownership of Christian families, until, 100 years later, it became a memorial house in honour of those who died in wars. Later The Spanish consul also built a house in Dalia and lived there, and maintained good connections with the inhabitants.

In 1911 The Ottoman authorities held a survey, according to which there were 198 houses and 838 inhabitants.

In August 2nd 1915 there was a tragic event in the village. During World War One the Ottomans used the village's centre as a military base and hid big arsenals in one of the houses. In that day the weapons' reservoir exploded, for some reason, and caused the death of over 30 Ottoman soldiers, and a same amount of the village's inhabitants, and many houses were destroyed. During this year the commander of the ottoman forces in the Middle East, Jamal Pasha, visited the village, and when he closely looked at the damages he ordered to reconstruct those villages, to compensate those affected and to release the youths from the compulsion of military service, in order to enable them to return and rehabilitate it.

The village developed through the mandate. A school was built there in 1936, the same school that was established a few years before in one room in the village, and some say that the first school was established in 1882, but was closed after a while.

The village suffered severely from the 1936 events. The Arab rebels schemed the inhabitants, burdened them and impoverished them, and even killed some of the inhabitants, in false accusations.

In 1951 the first local council was established. Before that, the various Mukhtars managed the internal issues.

Daliat El Carmel became one of the leading villages in the Arab sector in Israel. Its inhabitants were famous for their diligence, they practised agriculture most of the time but from the beginning of the Sixties many of them turned to contracting jobs in building, excavations and renovations. They worked all around the country as contractors and recruited workers from inside and outside the village. The village flourished during the Seventies and Eighties. It was most salient and distinguished

culturally and had many artisans and writers. Today there are over 60 writers, poets, journalists and artists living in the village. Some of them acquired international reputation. Lately a university was established in the village, which in the future will develop to the first Druze University in the world. There is a publishing house in the village, publishing encyclopaedias and publications spread all around the Arab world. In 1982 a memorial house in honour of the Druze soldiers that died in Israel's wars was established. Two members of that village were members of parliament, and in addition one of the inhabitants was a supreme judge in the religious Druze court. There are many senior officers serving in the army and military, and many senior officials. The village is the spiritual cultural capital of the Druze population. It publishes the most advanced Druze journal in the world. There are famous cultural and art institutions in the village, which play a very important part in the spiritual lives in the country.

There are around 14000 inhabitants, and over 95 percents of them are Druze.

Usfia

It is the second village in the Carmel, next to Dalia. Established in the same time as Dalia, during the rule of Ameer Fakher El Din. However, some claim that it was the first village in the Carmel. It is located 12 kilometres from Haifa and has views of the Haifa bay and the Galilee and Hermon Mountains. Near it is the highest hill in the Carmel. In ancient times a Hebrew village was built there, Huseifa. Antiquities found there are evidences for Byzantine and other settlements in the area. When the first Druze family settled there, in the 17^{th} century, it was empty. The flow of settlement increased, until, in the middle of the Fifties of the 19^{th} century, there were more inhabitants there than in Dalia, the neighbouring village, according to the evidence of one traveller. The village slowly developed during the rule of the Ottoman Empire and the mandate and there were no special or exciting events, differing from other villages. Christian inhabitants lived in peace with the Druze majority. The inhabitants suffered from plotting and scheming by the Arab rebels, in 1936. After the state was established a local council was founded in 1951. It established schools and constructed infrastructures in the village. The inhabitants worked as farmers and in various jobs and works. Lately, only few of the inhabitants work as

farmers. The majority practise liberal professions, clerical works, trade, tourism and construction. In the last 10 years of the 20th century there was an increased development of tourism in the village. Also, the western area of the village was opened to the settlement of foreigners who bought lots from the inhabitants and built houses. Today Usfia is an integrated village, in which members of all communities live, but the majority are Druze people.

In the village there is a grave of a saint Druze prophet, Abu Abdalla. The belief is that he is one of the five fundamental prophets in the Druze belief. His grave is near a sweet -water spring. Every year in November there is pilgrimage to his grave.

Two parliament members are originally from Usfia. Also, one supreme judge of the Druze religious court, a number of consuls, professors, senior offices and a number of writers and artisans are from Usfia.

In the Fifties the central military cemetery, in which the first Druze casualties after the application of the compulsory recruitment law in 1956 were buried, was constructed. During the Eighties Druze military cemeteries were also established in the Galilee. In Usfia there is a High School, a Junior High School, two Elementary schools, an educational centre, a pedagogic library and other cultural and educational institutions.

Kfar Smaia'

It is a small Druze village lays 30 kilometres eastern to Naharia, on a 575 meters tall hill. It is an ancient village. During the Second temple period and during the Phoenician period it was settled. Some claim that it was first settled by Druze people in the 11th century, when the Druze religion was established. Others claim that it was first settled during the rule of Ameer Fakher El Din, in the 17th century. The inhabitants suffered severely, under the rule of the Ottoman Empire and the British Mandate, from attacks of their neighbouring Arab enemies and rebels. They kept their lands and never left, despite the pressures they faced. Most inhabitants of the village are Druze people. Alongside lived, during all these years, Christian inhabitants, that maintained close and tight relations and cooperation with them.

There are several holy sites for the village's inhabitants. The most important of them is a dome-covered room, which was only recently constructed, in memory of seven famous and distinguished religious figures

who used to assemble there and discuss religious issues. Some claim that the great Druze theologian, Sheikh El Fadel, also visited there several times, and prayed there. The second holy site is the praying house built by Sheikh Halil Tafesh, a distinguished religious figure, who lived in the village in the end of the 19th century, and brought honour to it.

The number of the village people in the middle of the 19th century was 280 inhabitants, 150 of them Druze people. When Israel was established the number increased to 576 people, and today there are over 2000 people living there. The village is managed by a local council of Kfar Smai'a and the neighbouring village Kisra. There are big olive plantations in the village, but local agriculture and farming ceased to be a source of maintenance, in the last generation. The village inhabitants work in a variety of works.

Kisra

An ancient village built upon a 740 meters high mountain and views of the surrounding area. It is located near Kfar Smai'a and Pukai'aa. There is no explanation for the meaning of the name, however there is evidence that the village's name was already mentioned in ancient Egyptian writings in the 12th century B.C. The village and its surroundings were conquered by the Assyrian conqueror Tigala Plasar. There is evidence that the settlement existed during the Crusades and the Romans before them. The village is mentioned in the crusaders writings under the name Kashara. The Druze people probably lived there since the establishment of the Druze religion. The Druze settlement lasting ever since, by individual emigrants who came from Lebanon. A reinforcement of the settlement occurred during the ruling of Ameer Fakher El Din, in the 17th century, but there were only very few inhabitants. In the middle of the 19th century there were 70 inhabitants in the village. In the beginning of the century their number increased to 250. Currently there are over 2000 inhabitants. It is managed by a joint local council of the village and the neighbouring village, Smai'a.

The inhabitants of Kisra were hard workers and very industrious. In the past their lands was rocky and not easy to work, but they used their diligence to make the best of it. Today the inhabitants work in various works, practised by all minorities in Israel. This is one of the few Druze

villages that has no holy place in it. However not very far from it, in other villages, there are many holy sites.

Hurfaish

Hurfaish is the most northern village of the 18 Druze villages in Israel. It is located near the Lebanese border. It suffered attacks and bombings by terrorists and enemies across the borders, and was one of the northern settlements that suffered from the horror of the Arab-Israeli struggle. Therefore, it is considered a border settlement and enjoyed the same privileges of a village in this status. Hurfaish was established in a site whose height is 659 meters above water level.

The origin of the name Hurfaish probably relates to the Harfush tribe, which ruled in Lebanon and in North Israel 300 years ago. The village is ancient, but the Druze settlement in it is probably new. The village enjoys a status of prestige since it is located on the traveller's path between the Druze concentrations in the Galilee and South Lebanon. Its closeness to the big Druze population in Hasbaia area, near Mount Hermon, gave important weight to the village, relative to other Druze villages in Israel. It was given a status of prestige and importance due to its location, under the high mountain that its top is a holy site: at the prophet Sabalan site. Prophet Sabalan is one of the holy Druze persons, lived in a cave in the top of the village, in the past. There are many stories about the personality and acts of this holy man, therefore a structure was built above the cave, and the place became a holy site, with all characteristics of such a place. After the site was established September 10th was declared a holiday, in which there is a mass pilgrimage of religious men to the site, in which important religious conventions are held. It is told that there were two villages in the area: Hurfaish and another village, but 500 years ago a fight burst between the two villages, and the inhabitants of Hurfaish won and deposed the inhabitants of the other village. We do not know what happened to the defeated inhabitants, but it is known that instead new emigrants arrived and joined those already settled and continued to construct the village. Today there are 3500 inhabitants. About 40 percents of them work in various security jobs, and the rest are farmers, merchandisers, professionals and small entrepreneurs. The village was managed by Mukhtars and local council. In 1967 a local council was established, which still manages the

current issues of the village. In 1998 the village received the honour to keep the festivals of the Israel's 50th Anniversary's celebrations, as the representative of the Druze villages. In that year a park was built near the village, on the top of the Sabalan mountain, which will attracts visitors. Another project in Hurfaish is the children's village, which is a branch of the enterprise of qualifying Israelis. In this village live children from all Druze villages, that have had abused lives, and they see it as a shelter and home.

Jat

A small village located on a 395 meters high hill, northern to Kfar Yarka and Abu Senan. There are evidences that the village existed from the ancient Egyptians times, and that it was settled during the second temple period. The village's inhabitants are committed to the monotheism belief from the beginning of the 11th century, and were active. In the religious books there is a mention of Sheikh Abu Arus, one of the main spreaders of religion in that period. In that time, many people were identified with the beginning of the Druze religion. In the beginning of the century there were about 150 inhabitants. Today there are around 1000 inhabitants. The village was isolated from the outside world for a long period. Only in 1966 was the access road paved. In the village there is praying house and one holy site: the grave of Sheikh Abu Arus. A local council together with the neighbouring village, Yanuh, manages the village.

Yanuh

A northern village near Tarshiha and built upon a 610 meters high mountain. The village views the Galilee Mountains and one can observe Acre and Haifa from there. The village is mentioned in the Talmud and was settled during the first and second temple periods. The name is mentioned in the bible. In the village remnants of the Byzantine and Roman periods were discovered. There are also testimonies of Crusaders, mentioning this village. The Druze settlement there is ancient. European travellers visited the village in the middle of the 18th century and according to them, there were around

170 inhabitants. Today the number of inhabitants increased to 2000. They work for the security forces, plants in the area and various jobs. There is a holy site in the village, named after prophet Shams. This name was mentioned in various sources as early as the 11th century. There is not much known about it, but it is a pilgrimage site for the Druze inhabitants. The village, together with the neighbouring village, Jat, are under the authority of one local council.

Sajoor

A village located on the Acre-Safad road, near Rama village, 25 kilometres after Acre. It is only 380 meters high and is beneath the mountains of the upper Galilee. The name is taken from the name of a Canaanite town called Shazoor. The village has existed since the days of the Pharaonics. Ancient cemeteries and stones were revealed in the village, which evidence settlement there. During Second temple period Jews settled the village, as there are graves of rabbinical persons. The village was settled by inhabitants who accepted the foundations of the Druze belief during the establishment of the Druze religion. The name Shazoor is mentioned in historical documents from various periods. In the beginning of the century there were about 200 inhabitants, and today their number increased to 2000. The village is managed by a local council. It has a holy site, named after prophet Yousef, according to tradition, is the grave of Yousef. The grave is inside an ancient house. It is very preserved.

Rama

A village located on a 425M high hill, on the main road between Acre and Safad. The origin of the name is Hebrew, and means highland, that is: a high place. It is known that it was settled by Jews during the second temple period. Druze people lived there during the establishment of religion, and one of the most important figures in the area, Sheikh Abu Shebel, is mentioned in the Druze resources as a main spreader and distributor of the Druze faith. He lived and operated in that area. The Druze settlement flourished in the village during the rule of Fakher El Din, in the 17th century.

After the rule of the Ma'ans the village, which was mostly settled by Druze people, suffered from scheming and plotting by the Ottoman authorities, and especially the cruel governors, such as D'aher El Omar and Eljazzar and Ibrahim Pasha. As a result, many left the village and immigrated to the Druze Mountain in Syria, where they are still called "The Rama people". They were replaced by Christians supported by the representatives of the powers in the area. In 1850 the Druze people were only one third of the inhabitants of the village, and the rest were Christians. In 1948 the village absorbed Muslim and Christian refugees from the surrounding villages. The Druze people living in the village hosted and protected, during this year, hundreds of Arab families, and saved them from being refugees in Lebanon. By this the number of Druze inhabitants in the village decreased, and today they are only about 28 percents of the total number of inhabitants. Rama is one of the most enlightened and erudite villages amongst the villages of Israel's Arabs. Its inhabitants practise liberal professions, Clerical works, agriculture and industry. The inhabitants own hundreds of olive trees.

Meghar

The biggest village occupied by Druze people in Israel. However, it is also occupied by Muslims and Christians, and therefore it is not the biggest Druze village. It is located on the side of mount Hazor, 310 meters high, but since it is located over the Sea of Galilee and the city Tiberia, which is 300 meters below sea level, it looks from distance as a high village. The origin of the name is Arab, and means cave. It relates to the many caves found in the area. The village was occupied by Jews and others, during Second Temple period, as can be demonstrated by archaeological findings and discoveries. These are very divers. In the Druze religious books there is evidence for the existence of people who worked and acted in the area. It is very probable that, during that period, it was a Druze village, especially in light of the fact that between it and the lake an important fight took place, in the middle of the 11th century, in which the Druze forces won. The area and its surrounds flourished and were very vital, during the rule of Ameer Fakher El Din. The Druze people enjoyed dominance in the area and their rule was complete and total. The area between the road combining Nazareth-Tibarias and Acre-Safad was occupied by Druze people, a few centuries ago. In the middle of the 17th century the Muslim, D'aher El

Omar, ruled, and he fought against the Druze population and decreased its strength. The Druze settlement reduced to only Meghar village, and the other inhabitants either lived in Meghar or left and moved to the Druze mountain. D'aher El Omar encouraged Christian emigration to the village, and so the number of Druze people in it decreased. Many Muslim families occupied in the village in the 19th century and in 1948. Today there are 17000 inhabitants, 45 percents of them are Druze people. The inhabitants practise different occupations and roles. There are no holy places for the Druze population in the village, but this village is the closest to the Shua'ib's grave in Hittin.

Ein El Asad

The smallest Druze village. 2 kilometres far from Rama, to the East, and 2 kilometers far from Beit Jan, to the South. The village is in the height of 585 meters. The name "spring of the lion" is originated in the spring in the centre of the village. According to tradition, a lion that lived there in the past used to stay in the spring and prevented anyone from approaching it. This village is relatively new, and is only 200 years old. Druze inhabitants from neighbouring villages utilized the spring and began to cultivate their lands around it. With time they bought houses and settled there. The area was full of trees and groves. Today the area is covered with olive trees. The inhabitants used to practise agriculture, however today this area is neglected. Today they work as constructors, merchandisers, clerks, etc. The village today has of around 900 inhabitants.

Beit Jan

Beit Jan is a big village in the upper Galilee.It isThe highest Israeli settlement. It is 940meters high. The origin of the name is in the Biblical name "Beith Dagon", a Hebrew town. The area is filled with antiquities and ruined places. The villages' inhabitants accepted the Druze faith when it was established. The village was famous for its varied and diverse activity. A neighbouring Druze village was Jarmak. This village was mentioned in the

travellers' literature, in the end of the Medieval Times. The village's inhabitants fought against the Egyptian intruder, Ibrahim Pasha, in 1834, and assisted the Druze rebels, that revolted against him in the Druze mountain and in South Lebanon. In the 19th century all village's inhabitants gathered and unified, and the village was famous for its firm and strong durability and resistance against the plotting and acts of the factors hostile to the Druze people, in that period. In the beginning of the century it was one of the biggest Druze villages in Israel, and the inhabitants and leaders used their strength in order to preserve and protect the small Druze settlement. There were only 900 inhabitants there, compared with 9000 inhabitants today. The village was ran and managed by Mukhtars, until a local council was appointed in 1964. Than the village was connected to the national roads network, and the access to it became easy. In the past the village people grew olive trees, vines and flock, and worked as farmers. Today the majority of the village's inhabitants serve in the various security arms and branches, and others practise various roles and jobs. The village is known as a security village. Three members of parliament are originated from the village and more than any other village it contains a high proportion of senior officers and public figures.

The village is located near mount Heidar, and on its top is the grave of the holy prophet Heidar. There is not much known about him. Recently, a huge structure was constructed around the grave, and the Druze believers from Beith Jan and other villages visit the site.

Pukaia'a

The village is located on the slope of a high mountain. It is 620 meters high. The mountain blocks the North side of the village. Pukaia'a is one of the most beautiful villages in Israel. When observed from above, one discovers a splendid view of the roofs of houses, vine-covered. This is an ancient view. It attracted the attention of travellers and visitors in various periods. Pukaia'a is mentioned in the various sources and the historical literature more than any other Druze village. It is one of the most ancient villages in Israel. It is also distinguished from other Druze villages by the fact that a Jewish community has existed and lived there for a long period. The Druze settlement in the village began in the 11th century, when the Druze religion was established. It lasts until today. The sources tell of widespread activity

between the village's inhabitants and the surrounding villages. Since this village is surrounded by other Druze villages, its inhabitants felt strong enough to initiate activities or to participate in operations whose aim is to defend and fortify the whole Druze settlement in the area. The village's inhabitants worked as farmers, and also raised flock and worked in various craft enterprises, such as locksmiths, carpenters and made agricultural and domestic tools. The village was established around the famous spring in the centre of the village. In the past that spring was a meeting place and assembly site for the inhabitants, in events of mourning or celebrations, or political or warlike events. The spring still exists and is an attraction site for many tourists and visitors.

Most inhabitants are Druze people, but there is also a big Christian population. There are several Muslim families and one Jewish family. In the beginning of the century the number of inhabitants was 659, and increased to the current number of 4000, of which 68 percents are Druze people. The village is managed by a local council, established in 1958. There are no specific holy sites in the village, except for praying houses for the various congregations and communities.

Abu Snan

The village is located on a 100M high hill, viewing Acre and the Mediterranean Sea in the Acre valley. It is located near the villages Yarka and Kfar Yasif. The origin of the name is unknown, but according to one version it was given to the village after a Crusader fortress was established there by a person with a similar name. Another version claims that the name stands for a sharp sword, which means that when it was established, the village was protected and non - permeable to the inhabitants. According to antiquities and ruins in the village the estimation is that it has existed for thousands of years. It was probably an important stop in the way between the Israeli's kingdom and the Phoenician kingdom. The archeological findings point that convoys of merchandisers came and went, and visited the village. The village was occupied and active during the establishment of the Druze religion. Near it and inside it important Druze emissaries operated and spread the belief among the inhabitants. The names of these emissaries are mentioned in the sources, and some of their graves are still in this area.

Ameer Fakher El Din Ma'ani constructed a palace inside the village, in 1617, for his son Ali. Relics of this palace still exist. In this period an important fight was held between the forces of Ameer Fakher El Din and his opponents. The Druze people won this fight and as a result ruled throughout the total area. The village continued to hold a hegemony status even after Fakher El Din stopped ruling. It was settled by Druze people, and there was also a small Christian minority. In 1864 the member of the village, Sheikh Saleh Khair, was appointed consul that represents the European interests in Acre. The Khair family was in an important position, on behalf of the Ottoman Empire, due to its many assets in the area. In 1914 the village sheltered the Bahaii leader Abbas Afendi, along with 30 families from his supporters. They settled in the village and stayed there for two years, as guests. They opened a school and created an important status for the village and its inhabitants, in the eyes of the Mandate authorities. In the middle of the 19th century the number of village inhabitants was almost 400, 260 of them Druze people and the rest were Christians. Today the Druze people are a minority in the village, since it absorbed, during and after 1948, many Muslim refugees that continued to live and settle there, and still live there today. There are 6000 inhabitants today.

In the past the village was managed and controlled by the Khair family, and afterwards Mukhtars were appointed. In 1964 a local council was established. The Abu Snan village "produced" the first Druze academician in Palestine, who studied, during the Thirties, in Beirut University, and when he returned he was appointed a governer on behalf of the Mandate authorities. Sheikh Abdalla Khair dedicated all his will and energy to establish a Druze museum and the collection of important items that reflect the lives of the Druze community. This museum was established in his house and was visited by many persons. During the Sixties the village member, Mr. Saleh Hazima, initiated the establishment of a local association whose aim is to preserve the Druze sites in Abu Snan village. He contributed his own money and renovated the holy site of prophet Zekharia, which was nearby. He also renovated the grave of another Druze religious man, Abu Faisel, and another grave, of Abu Husin, another religious figure. This association attempts to preserve also the graves of the Druze emissaries that acted in the area when the religion was established. In the western area of the village is a water spring, Ein Mimas, which was in the past a village, in which Sheikh Abu Jumaa operated. Other graves are located in various spots around the village.

Julis

A medium-in-size village, part of the group of villages Yarka, Julis and Abu Snan, which is an important concentration of the Druze population in Israel. The village is 16 kilometers from Acre. The origin of the name is not known. Findings show that it existed during the Byzantine and Roman periods. The Druze settlement in the village is from the first period of establishment of religion. The village was active, as all near villages, in spreading the Druze belief, in the beginning of the 11th century. The Druze settlement reinforced and strengthened in the following periods. During the Crusader period a structure was built there, and its remnants still exist. The village is mentioned in the history books as an important town that existed in 1388 and was settled by Druze people. Travellers that passed in the area in the 19th century mention the existence of the village. In the beginning of the century there were about 350 inhabitants, and today there are 4000 inhabitants. The Tariff family, that leads the Druze community for over 200 years, lives there. The Druze leader was the Nafaa' family, from Beith Jan. It was willingly transferred in the 18th family from the Nafaa' family to the Tariff family, since the members of Tariff family took good care of Sheikh Ali El Fares. This Sheikh was born in the near village, Yarka, and used to pray in a near cave, between Yarka and Julis. The Tariff family members adopted Sheikh Ali El Fares and hosted him in their houses, and due to this the Sheikh was discovered as one of the most important religious leaders in the area. Sheikh Mahana Tariff renovated and rehabilitated the structure surrounding the grave of Shua'aib, in 1882. He was given the status of a judge for Druze matrimony issues for Palestine's Druze people, on behalf of the Ottoman Empire. This role awarded the village and its inhabitants a status of priority. During most of the 20th century Sheikh Amin Tariff, one of the leaders of the Druze people, led the Druze community in Israel.

The village is managed by a local council established in 1967. It has several holy sites.

Yarka

An important Druze village, located 17 kilometers east of Acre, and built on a 534 meters high mountain. It is one of the biggest Druze villages in Israel, and the leading village, regarding economy and industry. The origin of the

name is the grave of Hushai of Arc, who was one of the consultants of King David, which is built in the village. The village is very ancient and probably existed before the Second Temple Period. When the Druze religion was established this was one of the most active villages in the area, and in it important work was performed, which founded and based the new belief and assisted in its absorption and acceptance. In the village there is also the grave of the biggest religious emissary of that time – Abu El Saraia G'anaim. His name, as well as the names of other emissaries who acted in the village is written in the holy Druze books. The village strengthened during the rule of Ameer Fakher El Din, and received a status of priority. The members of the Mua'di family, who settled there generations before, and had many assets there, ruled the village and even, in a certain period, ruled the area between Acre and Tiberias. The leaders of the Druze people in Lebanon, members of Junblat and Arslan families, had tight connections with members of the Mua'di family, and tight collaboration between them. The Druze people of Yarka assisted their brothers in Lebanon in the 1860 events and assisted Sultan El Atrash's revolt against the French in 1925, and also assisted in several other occasions.

All inhabitants are Druze people. In the beginning of the century their number was 980 and today their number reaches 9000. The village's inhabitants practised agriculture in the past, and later turned to work as constructors and under the military forces, and in the last 20 years Yarka became the leading village in industry and trade, among Israel Arabs. Plants and modern projects were constructed, on a wide scale, and it also absorbs workers that live in the neighbouring areas. A local council was established in 1959. Since the establishment of the state until today Sheikh Jaber Mua'di was a leader, a parliament member and a minister deputy. Also, Sheikh Kamal Mua'di was a member of the spiritual Druze leadership and a judge in the Druze court. Other persons also had key roles in the political, cultural and trade lives.

Shefaram

This is not a Druze settlement, but rather a settlement in which Druze people have lived for a very long time. In the past most of the lands of the village were under the ownership of Druze people, especially in the period following the rule of Ameer Fakher El Din. However, with time the Druze

people lost this advantage. Today the Muslims are the majority in Shafaram, and second-in-size are the Christians. The Druze people are only 20 percent of the total population. The Druze settlement in Shefaram has existed for a long time, but no one knows for sure when it first began. It is known that the Druze people in Shefaram were always strong and enjoyed prestige and ruling, both by the Ottoman authorities and the local governors. Their relations with their Christian, Muslim and Jewish neighbours were usually good. The Druze people in Shefaram suffered, along with their neighbours, from attacks by the Arab rebels during the Thirties of the 20^{th} century, whom, on behalf of the supreme Arab revolt, and the Arab nationality, assassinated innocent people, robbed houses and acted in rudeness and crudity toward the calm civilian population. These rebels viciously murdered the father of Sheikh Saleh Khnaifes, along with other Druze people, who did nothing wrong and were innocent. Today members of all communities live in Shefaram in peace, understanding and cooperation.

Today about 5000 Druze inhabitants live in Shefaram. Some of them work in agriculture, others in construction, trade, industry, clerical work, etc. One Member of Parliament is originated from Shefaram: Sheikh Saleh Khnaifes. Another member of the village was the judge of the Druze court, Sheikh Husin A'lian. Also, there are many famous Druze writers and poets in Shefaram.

Chapter Fourteen

Druze Stories

How people used to forecast a rainy year

In the past all Druze residents were farmers. They cultivated their lands efficiently and diligently, since that was all they had. They used to get up very early in the mornings, around 3 am, prepared their meals getting ready their tools, seeds and other required commodities, and began to walk to their land, which was usually far. The families usually had a horse or a donkey. The eldest family member rode the horse or donkey, and the others walked by foot. They worked until dark and then returned to their houses. Since agriculture was their main practice they devoted considerable amount of time to all phenomenon involved in agriculture and nature, including the theme of rain. With time, they had accumulated important experience, according to which they could predict, more or less, what is going to happen. One of the methods of forecasting a rainy or dry year, or which months will be rainy, was the method of the salt stack. In August they used to bring six fig leaves, put them on the roof and putting, on each leaf, an equal stack of salt, and than decided what month each leaf represented, from November to April. August is a month with much dew. After a week they used to check which stack melted more. If the stack melted it was a sign for them that the month represented by it will be rainy, and if it only slightly melted, this was a sign for them that there won't be much rain in that specific month. The old people say that the forecast was usually accurate.

When a male son is born

The Druze society, like other Oriental societies and similar societies in the third world, assigned more importance to males than to females and was happier when a male child was born, since this society was built upon hard agricultural work, constant fighting, on working the land, on the building of the house, trees cutting and roads paving. All these were made solely by men. Women in the traditional Druze society, influenced by the Oriental society, belonged inside the house, and their role was to take care of the children, to cook, clean and prepare the house to be ready when the husband comes back from work.therefore, families were happier, in the past, when the young-born was a male rather than a female. The behaviour of the family was different when the young-born was a male. They were happier, held celebrations, made vows and proudly walked in the village. However, when the young-born was a female, it was all modest and quiet. Even before the birth families made vows, that if a male is born they will first count the number of hairs on his head near the grave of a holy man, as a virtue against the evil and as a plea for God to give them a male. In the Druze villages there were many families who only gave birth to females and had no sons. The longing for male-sons was always strong and led to folklore, and strange stories and behaviours. For example, in one of the villages a certain family gave birth to seven daughters. The mother became pregnant for the eighth time, and when she was brought to the hospital, near the time of birth, the father swore that if she gives birth to another daughter he would divorce her, as if she were guilty. An oath of a Druze man is binding and it is irreversible. The woman did not deliver a boy, but she was not deported. The Druze believe that it was an intervention of God, who did not wish that this woman will be deported, therefore she delivered twins, two daughters... that means that the oath is invalid, since it related only to an option of one daughter.

Because of the cows of Shezor...

Those driving on the main road between Acre and Zefat, towards Zefat, will arrive, after Carmiel, at a steep road, and see in front of them the mountains of the upper Galilee, and in their sight is the Druze village, Beit Jan, the highest village in Israel. This steep road causes the vehicles to slow down,

which enables those sitting in the car to look at the surrounding view. Then they notice that to the right is Shezor and opposite is the village Sajur. This village was characterized, since the establishment of the state, by a large number of security men, born in that village and living there. They serve in all branches of military forces. Some of them even reached high military ranks. The village was so "security" in nature that it was known that on Sunday, when all men return to their bases, an officer-on-duty remains in the village…

One of the young and promising Druze leaders was Amal Nasr El Din, a dynamic, brave, enlightened man, with strong and deep Druze orientation and consciousness and with deep aspiration to promote and advance the issues related with the Druze community. Amal was active for 20 years in the ruling party, "Mapai", and tried to achieve most basic services for the Druze community. He heard many promises, however, in reality, not much was fulfilled. In the early Seventies he decided that he can no longer deceive those who supported him and as a result he intended to quit from his various roles. The last straw that broke the camel's back was an event that seems, even today, peculiar.

Following a suggestion of the "Mapai" party regarding allowing equal rights to the Druze community, a committee was established, under the leadership of minister Ygal Alon, and the participation of Aba Hushi, the mayor of Haifa and the minister Eliahu Sason. After discussions the committee concluded that it is impossible to disconnect the Druze community from the Arab departments, since such a move would irritate the Arab public activists, and on the other hand, they can not be imparted full equality in the current condition. Amal refused to accept this reasoning, he summoned a press conference in Haifa and declared his disappointment with the ruling party, and he justified his move by presenting all complaints and arguments about things that disturbed him. Among other things he said that it is impossible that the cows of Shezor have electricity while the neighbouring "security" village Sajur is not connected to electricity. The leader of the "Likud", Mr. Menahem Begin, heard about this. He called Amal and discussed the situation with him, for several hours. Amal said to Begin: "half of the Jewish people came into my house and I found that they are ungrateful. I believe that the good people are in the other half, that did not enter my house, and I hope I will not be disappointed". Begin answered him: "We are to be blamed, since we ignored you and did not visit you. I am glad that you came to us and promise you full equality…". Amal left the "Mapai" party, quit all his roles and joined the "Likud" party. After only

several months Amal was elected to the Israeli parliament, and was able to implement and fulfill all the plans that he had dreamt of. His party, the "Likud", won the elections. Amal pressured, tried, threatened and demanded equality between the Druze people and the Jews. He also demanded to connect the village Sajur to electricity. The village was connected. The inhabitants of Sajur no longer envied the cows of Shezor.

The flag and the five brothers

The Druze flag is a very important religious, social and communal symbol for the Druze. It symbolizes pride, prestige and victory. The Druze warriors went to war only under the aegis of the flag and fought for it. In important gatherings the inhabitants of every village or family came and summoned under their own flag. Even in weddings, when the groom was from one village and the bride from another – the bride was led to her new house with the flags of the two villages. Their special flag always accompanied the inhabitants of the village, who made a pilgrimage to one of the holy sites, over their heads. The Druze commanders used to choose the bravest warriors in order to carry the Druze flag during the fight. As long as the flag was high, the morale was high and the warfare was in its peak. If the flag inclined down or fell, the motivation was immediately harmed.

In one of the bloody fights during the Druze revolt against the Frenchmen in Syria, a member of the Gazala family was chosen to carry the flag. This family was famous for the courage of its sons. He carried the flag in pride, courage and determination, until he fell down. The flag, however, did not fall, since the warrior's brother was next to him. He let other people take care of his brother, held the flag and raised it up. During the fight the second brother was also killed. The third brother, who was nearby, caught the flag and raised it. After a while he, also, got killed. The fourth brother took the flag, raised it and was also killed. The fifth (and last) brother raised the flag, but other warriors tried to prevent him from carrying the flag, and to volunteer instead of him, in order to look after him, for his old parents. However, he was very stubborn and insisted to carry the flag. The fight almost ended. Only few shots were heard, and one of the shots hurt him.

The Sheikh who silenced the opening of a cannon in his white turban

The Druze warriors are famous for their courage, sacrifice, adhesion and persistence. Because of the special circumstances of the Druze community, which suffered from persecutions through its entire life by various governors and religious adversaries, the Druze men had to be constantly alert, in order to repulse threats, dangers and rioters. The Druze youths studied the secrets of fighting from a very young age. It was possible, in the various fights, to see old men riding their horses, holding swords and attacking their enemies fearlessly. In the 19th century and beginning of the 20th century the Druze fought almost constantly. In one of their wars against the Frenchmen the French warriors brought a tank and viciously bombed the town Sweida. The Druze had no tanks or cannons to repulse and silence the threatening danger. However, they were very courageous. One of the older Sheiks felt that it was impossible for him to see the tank bombing the civilians' homes without reacting. He jumped on his horse, held his sword in his hand and like a storm he assaulted the tank. The French soldiers saw dust and a figure riding a horse, coming toward them. They were sure that they are totally protected in their tanks and that these rural people will surrender and be unable to react. The Sheikh came toward them fearlessly. They directed their personal weapons toward him, however he did not get hurt and he did not slow his speed. They used the last weapon they had: they pointed a tank's shell toward him, but this also failed, and he did not get scared. They became more and more panicked as he got near them. Suddenly they noticed the Sheikh arriving at the tank, blocking the opening with his white turban, and later he got off the horse, attacked the tank and captured the three stunned soldiers that were in the tank.

The screaming hill

Mount Hermon is one of the highest and most impressing mountains located in the triangle of Syria, Lebanon and Israel. This is a "Druze mountain", for the last thousand years, it is surrounded by Druze villages. In the north are the villages Hasbaia and Rashaia, in the east several small Druze villages, in the south the village Majdal Shams and other villages of

the Golan Heights, and in the west the mountains of Upper Galilee and all Druze villages in Israel.

In the Golan Heights there are four Druze villages: Majdal Shams, Masaada, Bukaata and Ein Kinia. There are about 15000 inhabitants in all these villages. Majdal Shams is one of the most beautiful villages in the area. It is located on the southern slope of the Hermon. The beautiful houses of the village look from distance as if they are scattered around the mountain like small dices of a children game and the village seems very quiet and pastoral.

The Druze inhabitants in the Golan Heights were, up to 1967, Syrian citizens. In this year Israel conquered the Golan Height from Syria and annexed it to Israel. The residents, who were highly active as Syrian citizens in Damascus the Capital, and who maintained close connections with their brothers in the Druze mountain, were suddenly disconnected from their land, culture and their feeling of security. In the Golan Heights there are many families who were disconnected from the rest of their family in Syria. Because of the state of war and the security pressure, there were no connections between the relatives from the two sides of the border. There was a huge abyss between members of one family. The disconnection was complete and it was impossible to maintain any connection between the relatives. Israel has conquered, during that war, the West Bank of Jordan and dominated million inhabitants. For them Israel opened the bridges to Jordan. The inhabitants of the West Bank could travell to Jordan, and from there to any other place. The inhabitants of the Golan Height, on the other hand, could only travell to Israel and Europe, but not to Syria and to the other Arab countries. Yet, life goes on, and the will to maintain communications between the two segments of the Druze community was stronger than any other thing. With time an improvised and unique solution was found: the village Majdal Shams is located on the border between Syria and Israel. In the middle there is a valley with wire fences and there are hills on the two sides. With time the Druze from both sides adopted a custom, according to which relatives stood in the two sides of the valley, looked at each other through telescopes and shouting out loud, or through loudspeakers, talking with each other. Despite the difficulties involved in the operation of this method, it was better than complete disconnection. The screaming hill became a famous site, visited by tourists, curious people and others.

The religious Sheikh and the arrogant commander

During the Thirties of the Nineteenth century the great commander, Ibrahim Pasha, the son of the governor of Egypt, Muhammad Ali Pasha, has conquered Palestine, Lebanon, Jordan and Syria and even arrived at the gates of Constantinopol, the capitol of the Ottoman Empire. He could have conquered it, too, had he not been stopped by the great powers. The Druze did not object this conquer since they had no reason to do this, however, several years later they had a cause to rebel. Ibrahim Pasha decided to disarm all population under his rule and to recruit all men to the military service. The Druze travelled to the Horan mountains, near the desert, and it suffered from bad climate, distance, mountains and inconvenient topography, but they were willing to tolerate this to win freedom. What did Ibrahim Pasha want from them? They decided to object and resist recruitment since they needed the youths to protect themselves against attacks by the neighbouring Bedouin tribes, as well as the need to protect the convoys of pilgrims from attacks by robbers and rioters. For the same reason they believed that they could not give away their few guns. The Druze leaders tried to speak with Ibrahim Pasha and to explain their attitude, but he refused to listen. He thought to himself: who are these Druze, to stand in his way and to interrupt him, the great commander, who conquered all the huge areas from Cairo to Constantinopol easily? He sent a military force of 3000 trained soldiers to the Druze mountain. The force was easily attacked, destroyed, and only few returned to tell others what has happened. Ibrahim chose his best commanders, assigned them as the heads of military forces and sent them to the mountain. They all returned defeated and ashamed. Eventually he decided to go himself, as the commander of a huge force. He parked with his army on the main way leading to the mountain and prepared himself for the crucial fight. In one of the days his people encountered an old Druze man riding a donkey and moving something. They arrested him, asked him about his identity and what he was moving. He told them, calmly and with self-confidence, that he is a Druze man who lives next to Mount Hermon and that he is transporting weapon and ammunition to his Druze brothers who rebel in Horan mountain. The moment the soldiers heard the word 'Druze' they became furious, but in the same time they also felt fear, despite the fact that they were facing a weak old man. The soldiers announced him that he is sentenced to death as an assistant of the enemies of the great commander. They were surprised when he laughed and said that the high commander is incapable of harming him,

that he does not fear him and that he is willing to tell this to him personally. The surprised soldiers had no option but to take him to their commander, Ibrahim Pasha. Ibrahim was even more surprised than his soldiers after they told him the whole story. He repeated his questions and posed them to the Sheikh, who was wearing the traditional Druze cloths and wore the white turban on his head. The Sheikh looked straight at the commander, and repeated what he said before, that he was transporting weapon to his brothers the rebels for their freedom and honour. And that he does not fear from him, since he can not harm him in any way. Life is in the hands of God and a regular mortal is incapable of giving or taking lives. The commander trembled and shivered. He probably felt that the man has a big secret and that he is so certain about himself and his integrity that he speaks with no fear. Ibrahim though for a long time, looked at the old man sitting near him and smiling, and later looked at his soldiers in the look of a person accepting faith and told them: take this man and release him.

For Mitha's beautiful eyes

Mitha was a beautiful, tall girl, with long hair, wide eyes and a beautiful face. She lived in one of the villages in the Druze Mountain with her husband, whom she had just married. He was one of the Druze praised commanders, famous as a strong fighter and brave commander. The Ottoman governor in Damascus launched a military force and arrested the commander with no valid reason. His wife highly impressed him and he wanted to take her for himself. People used to fulfill all his commands and never refused him. He believed that taking a wife from her husband is not something terrible. He was, after all, the all-mighty governor, and whatever he wished was always fulfilled. Until now all that he asked and commanded was performed quickly and accurately. The Druze, on the other hand, were not satisfied with this demand. First of all, the Druze people never agree to marry their sons or daughters to non Druze people, and second – the girl was married, and there is no law available to justify separation from her legal husband. Third – in the Druze society the habit is to ask the girl if she wishes to get married, and this can not be dictated and enforced from above, even if the husband is a powerful governor. Fourth – such form of application assaults the Druze respect and means provocation. The Druze delegation did not accept the governor's request. It returned home. When

they arrived to the mountain, the Druze declared a revolt, which developed into a bloody war, and all because of Mitha's beautiful eyes.

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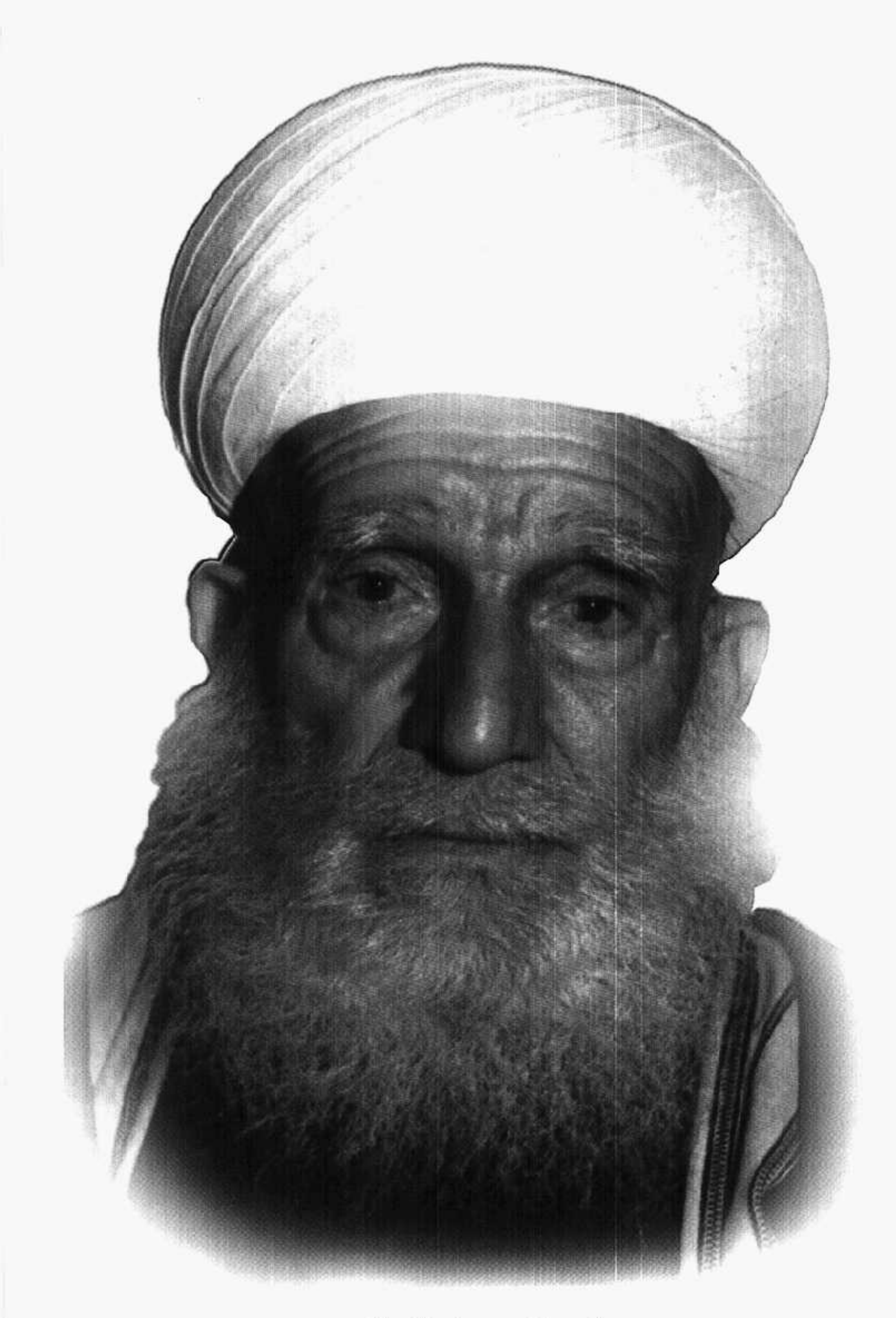
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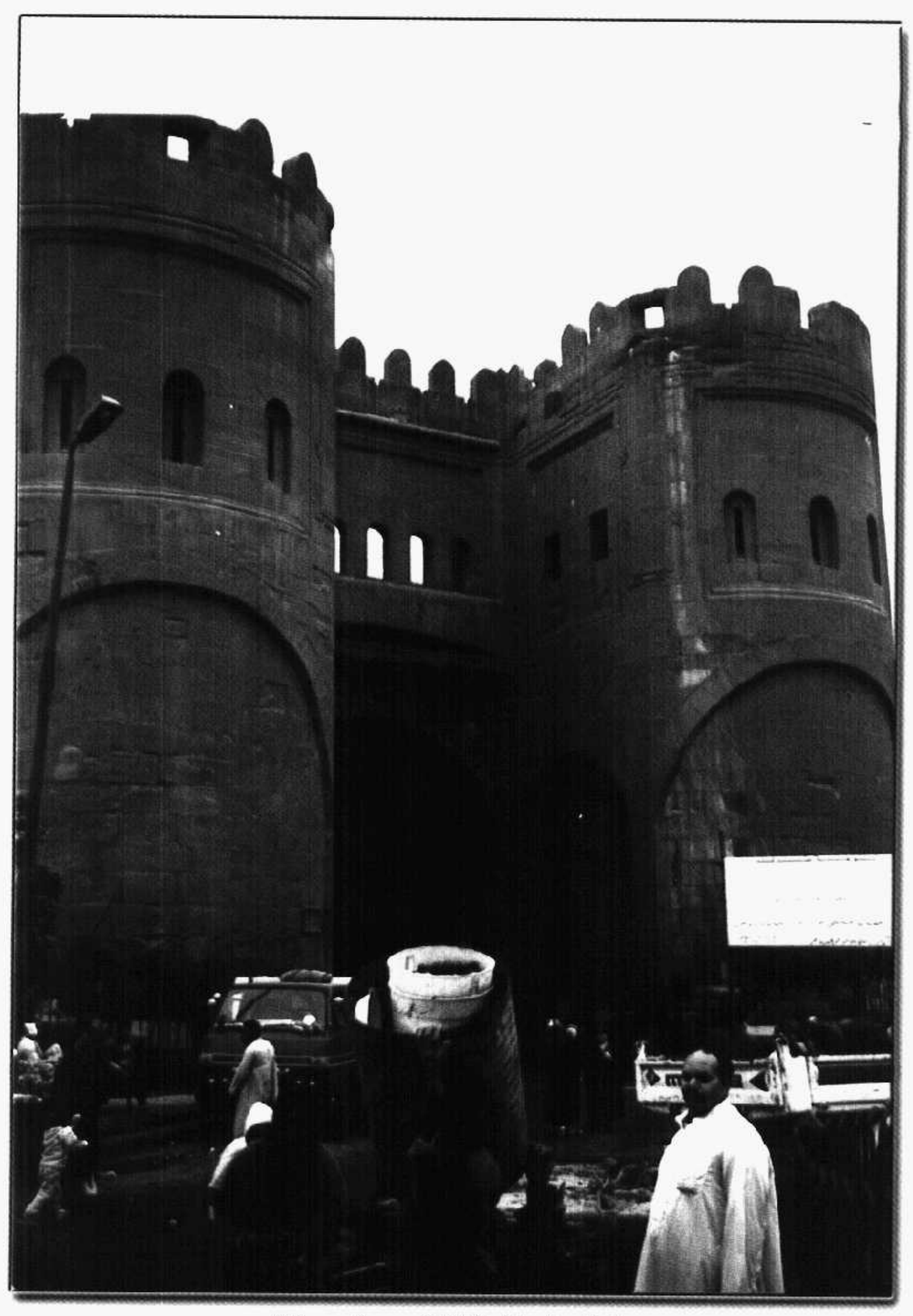
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Sheikh Ameen Tareef
The spiritual leader of the Druze in Israel



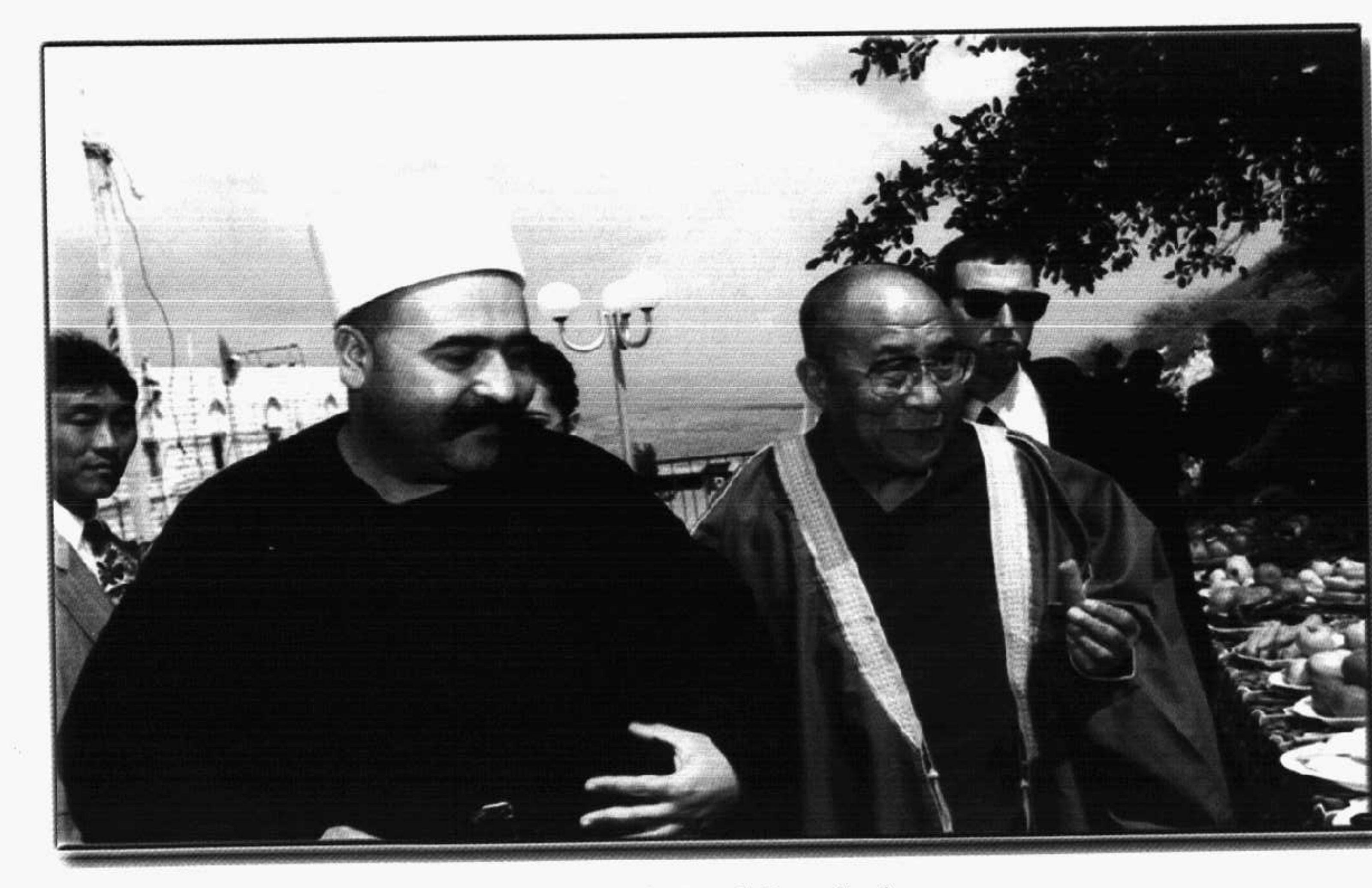
The palace of El Hakim in Cairo
In which the Druze faith was established



A Druze



Druze leader in Israel



Dalai Lama with the Israeli Druze leader



In the Brazilian Druze house



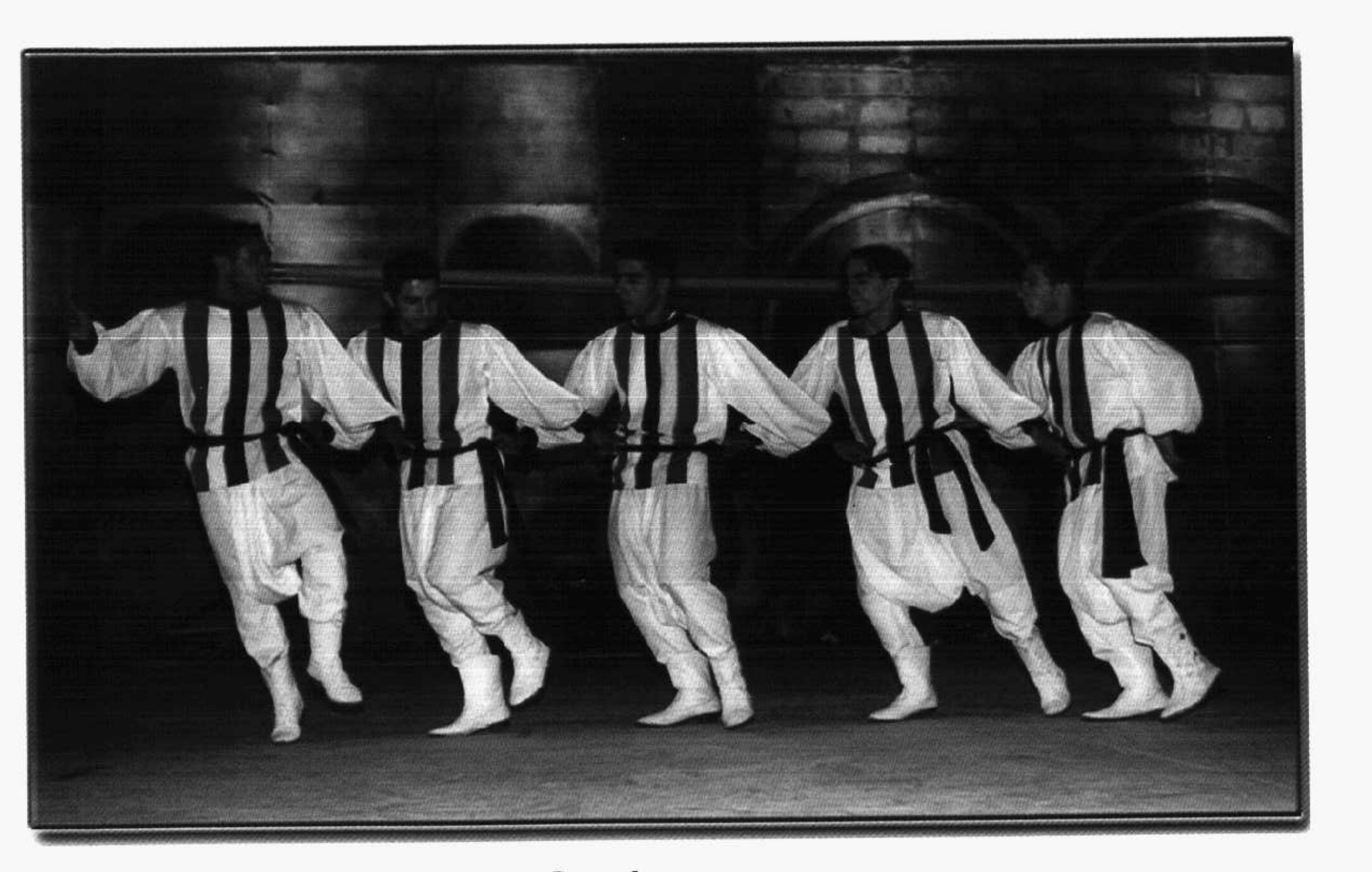
Druze girls



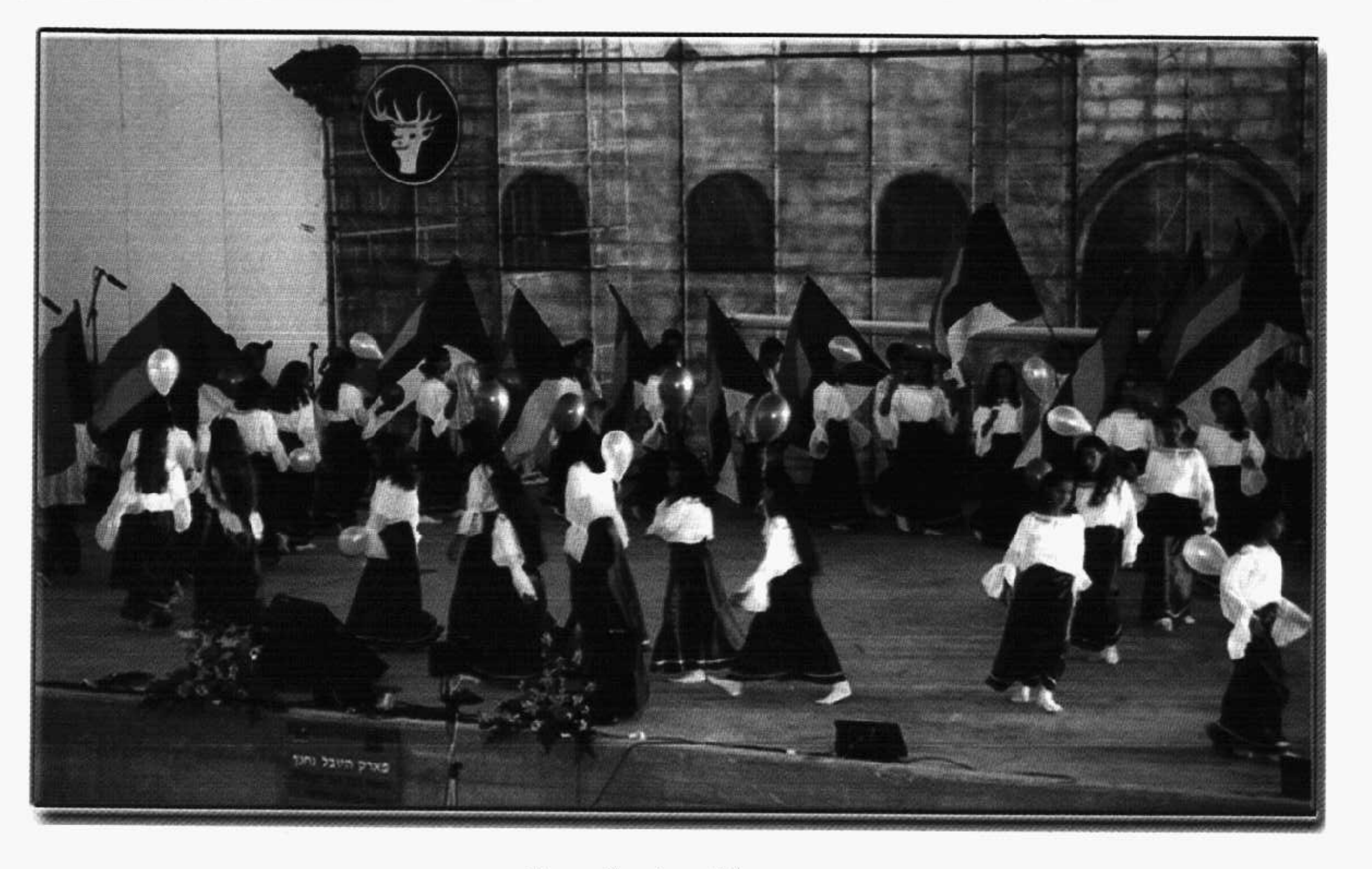
Druze women



Religious young children



Druze dancers

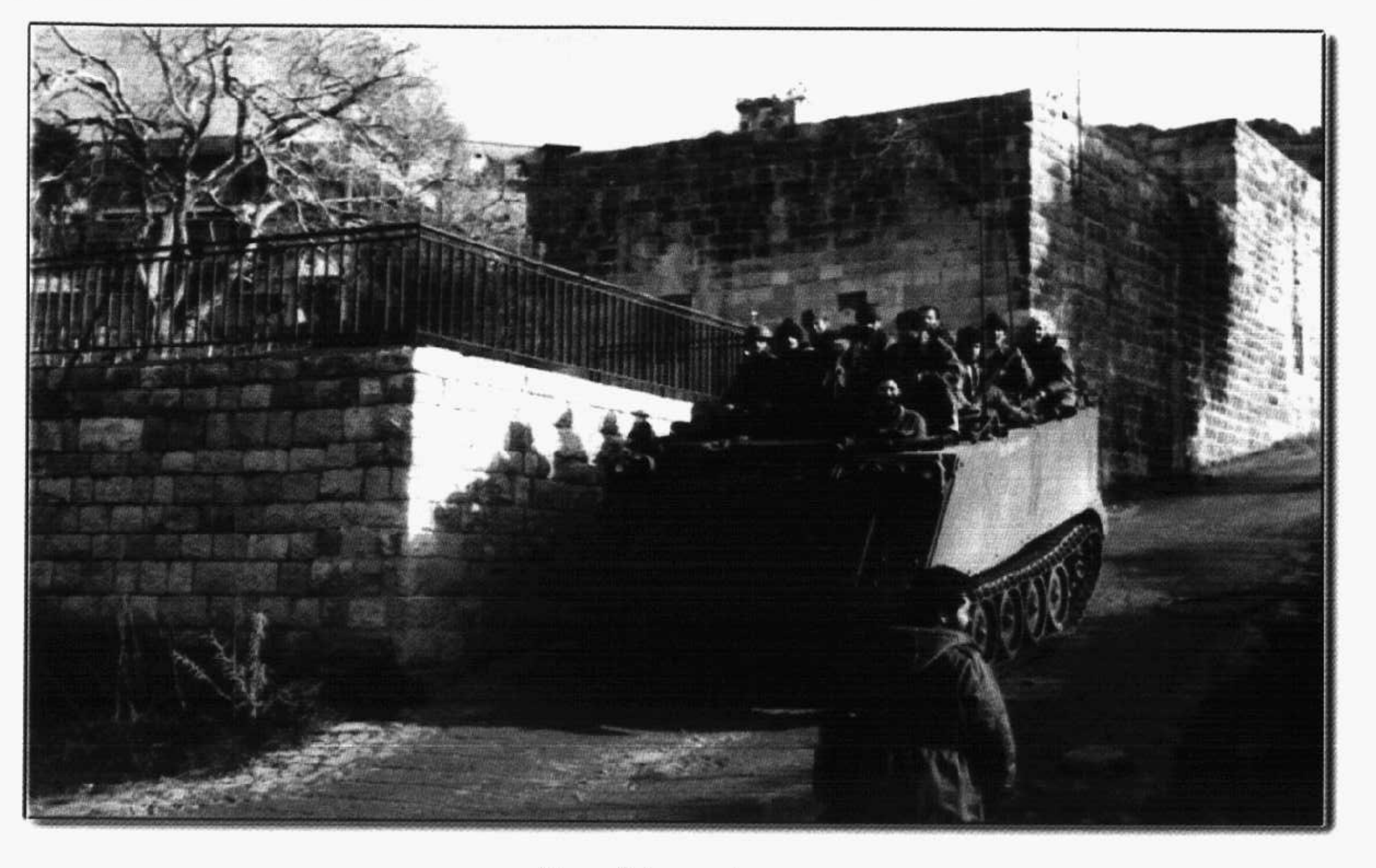


Druze dancing girls





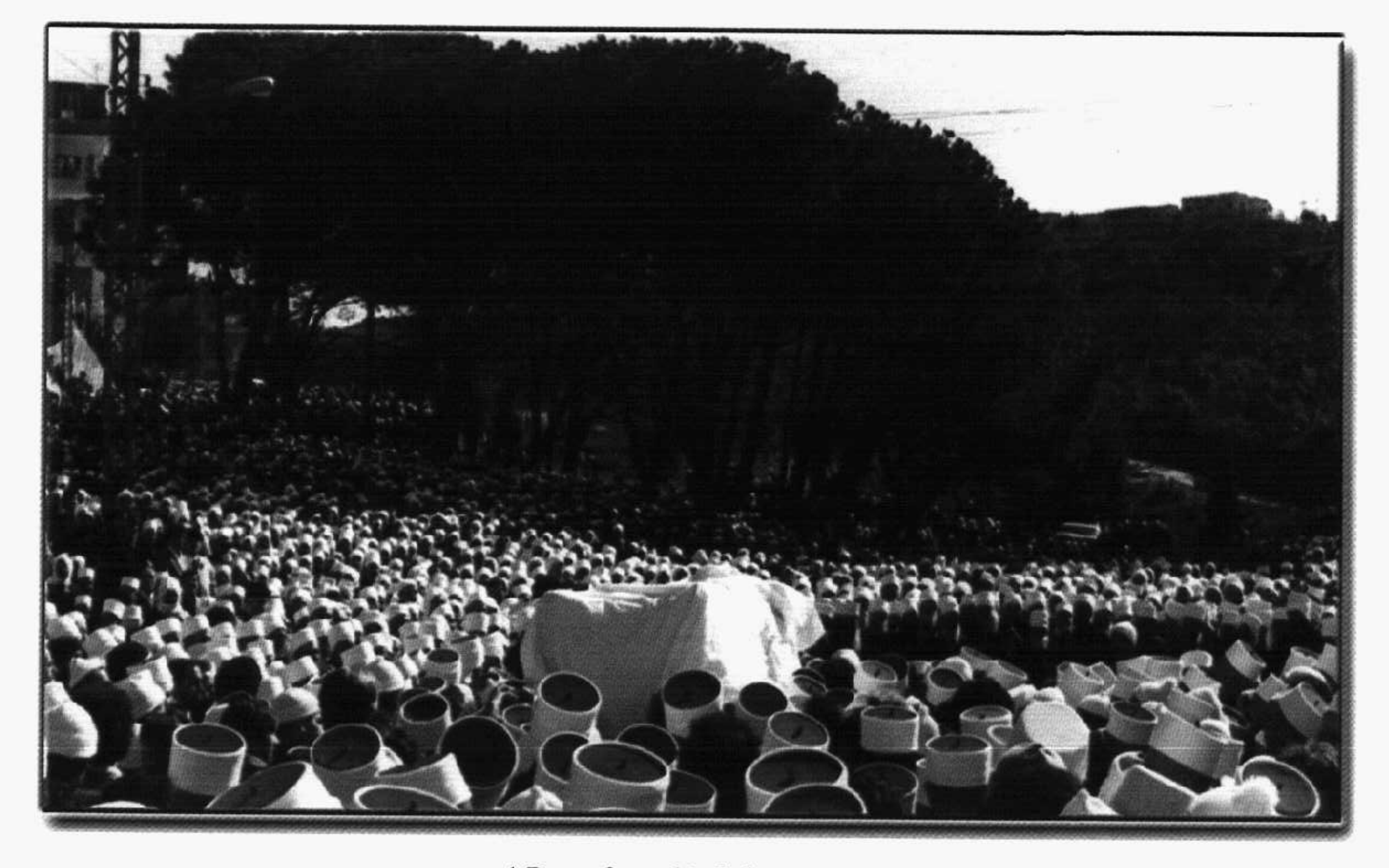
Israeli Druze scouts



Druze Lebanese Army

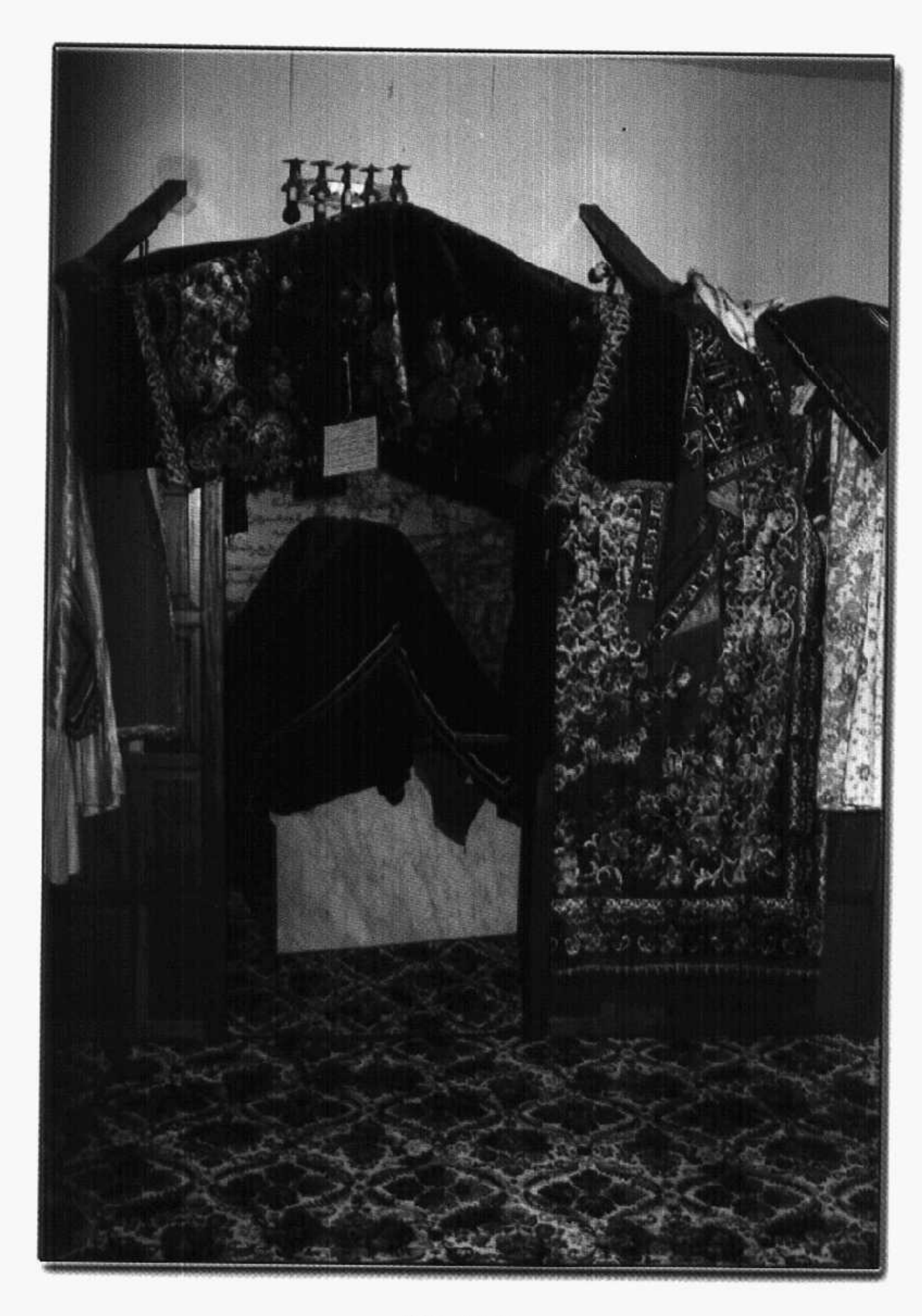


An official funeral for Druze Israel soldiers



A Druze funeral in Lebanon

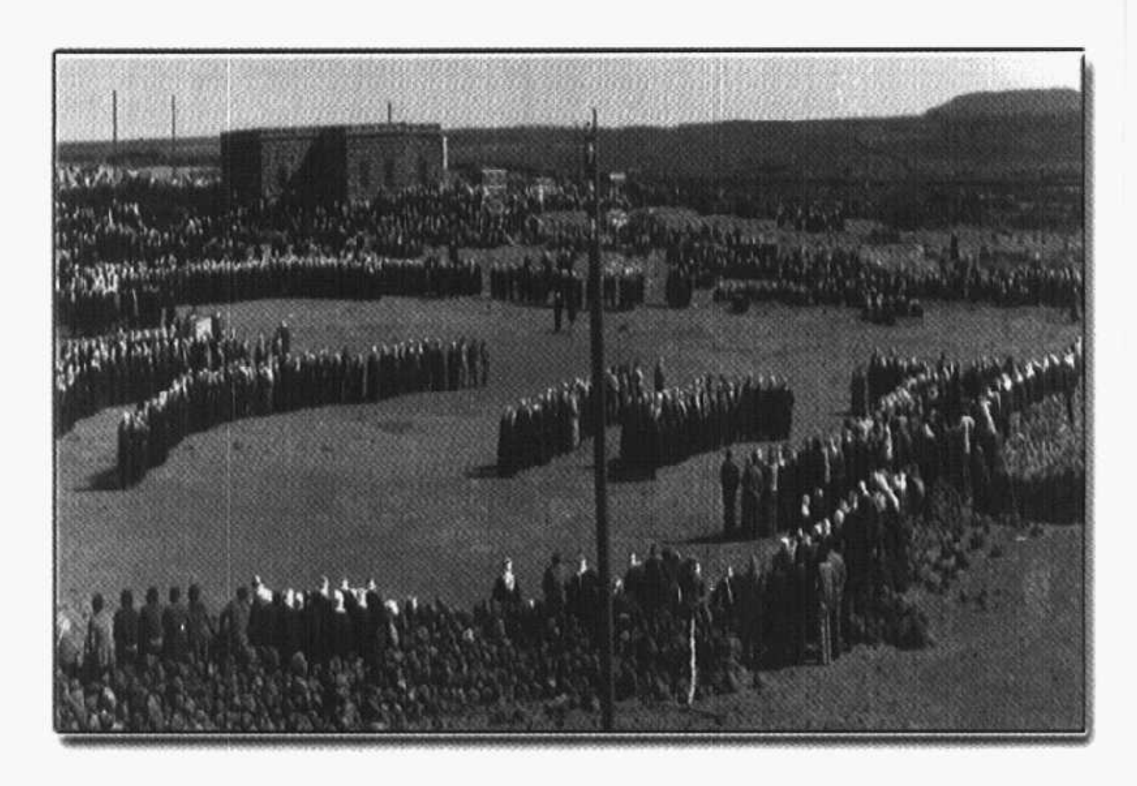
A traditional set of coffee



Itro Tomb



Druze delegation with the Ottoman governor in Damascus in 1915



Druze funeral of a leader in Syria



Funeral of Sultan El Atrash



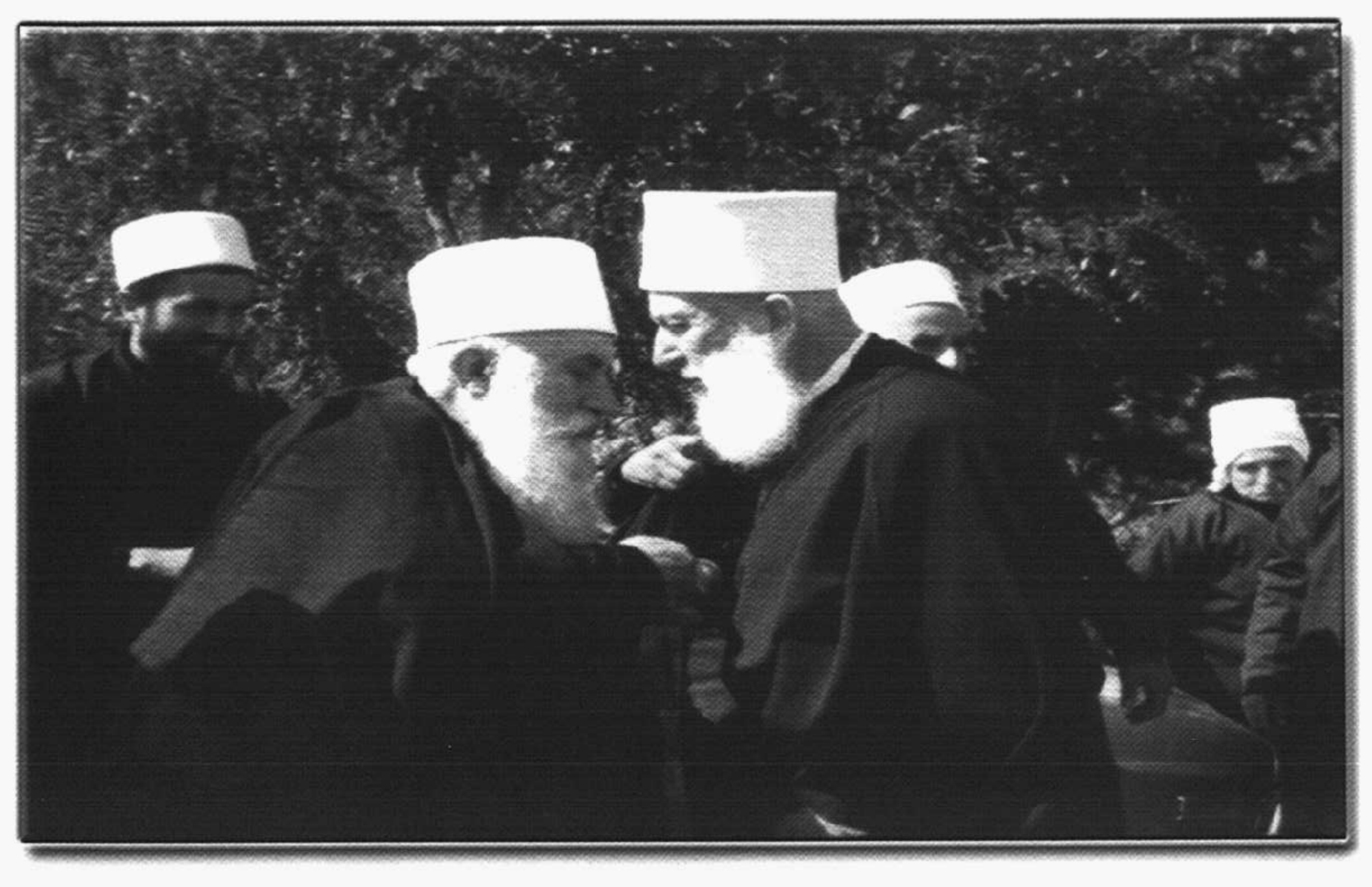
Druze leaders of Lebanon in 1980



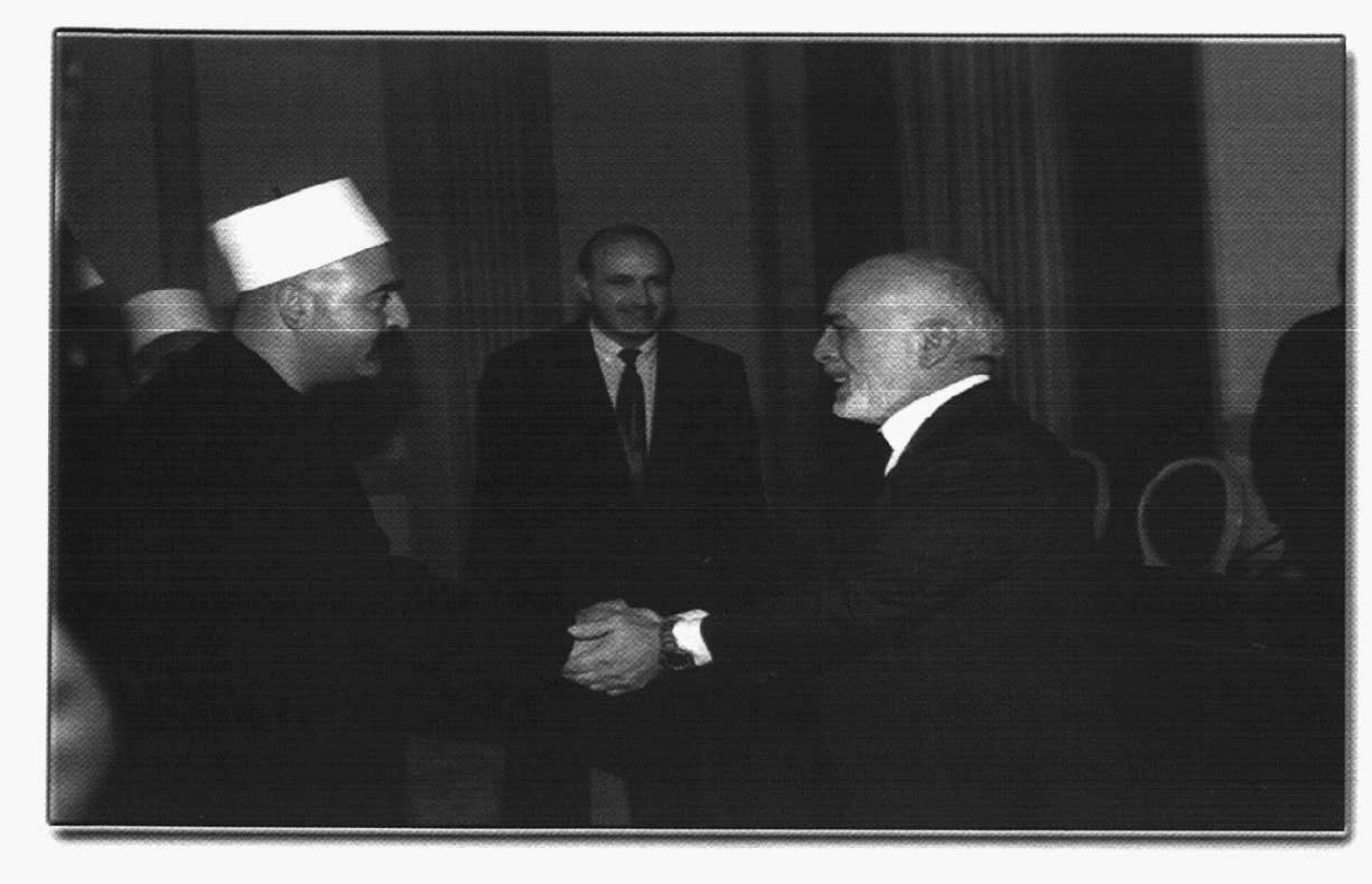
Leadership of the Druze in Lebanon in the eightieth



Lebanese and Israel Druze leaders



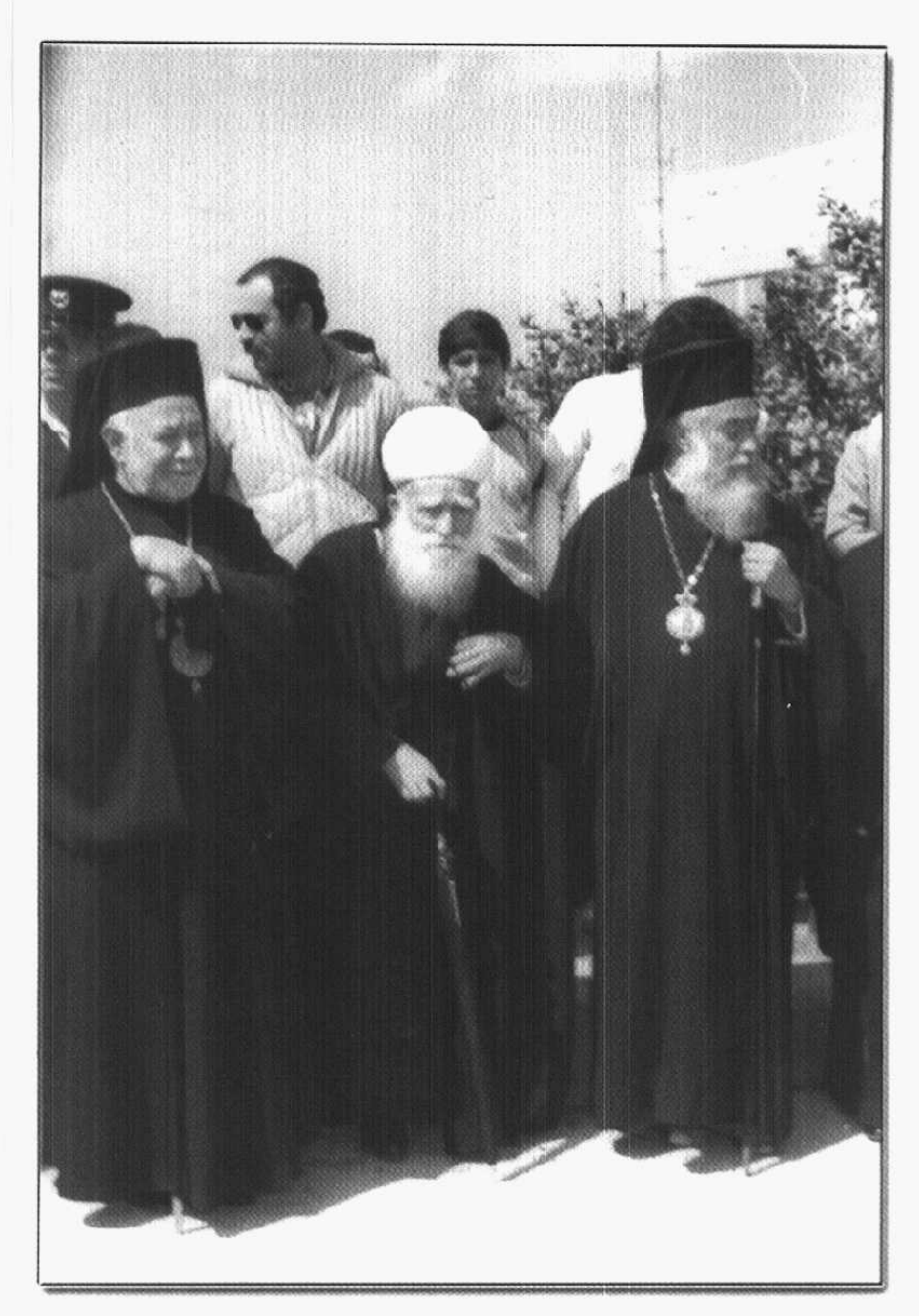
Druze religious leaders



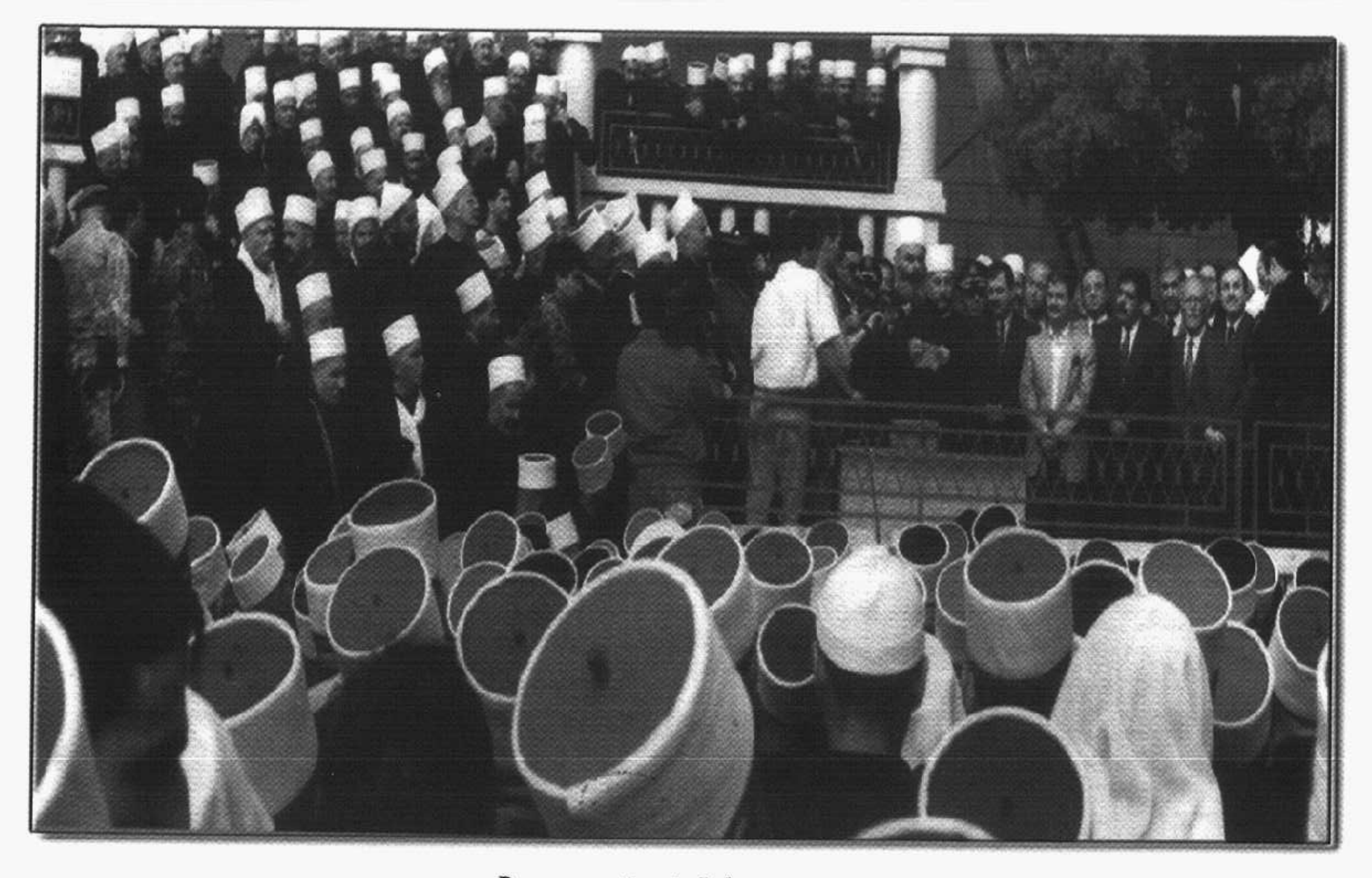
King Hussein with Israeli Druze leader



Druze and Palestinian leaders



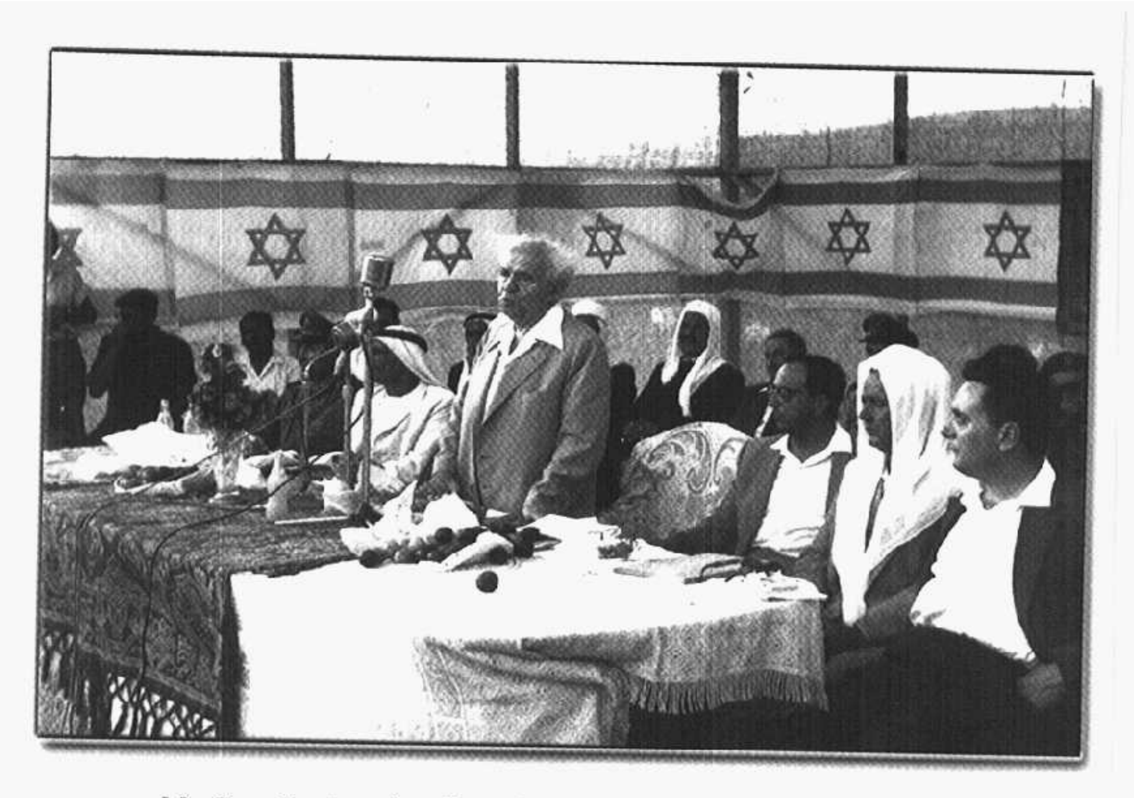
Druze and Christian leader



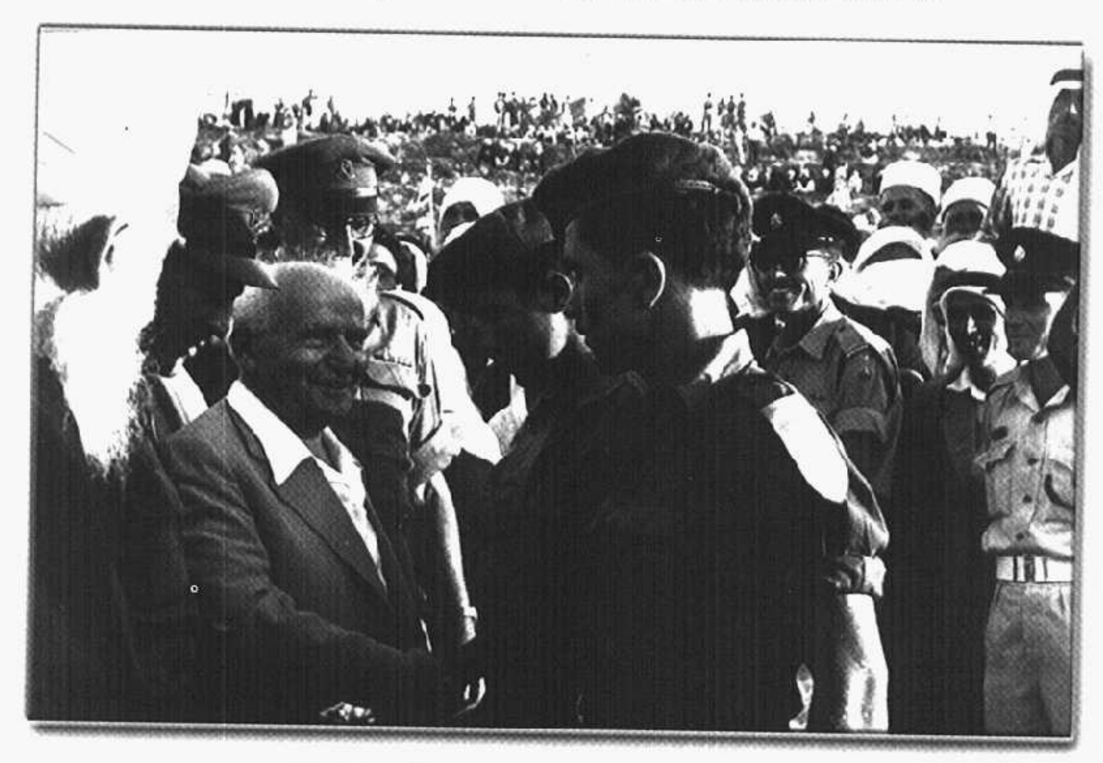
Druze meeting in Lebanon



First Israeli Druze soldier

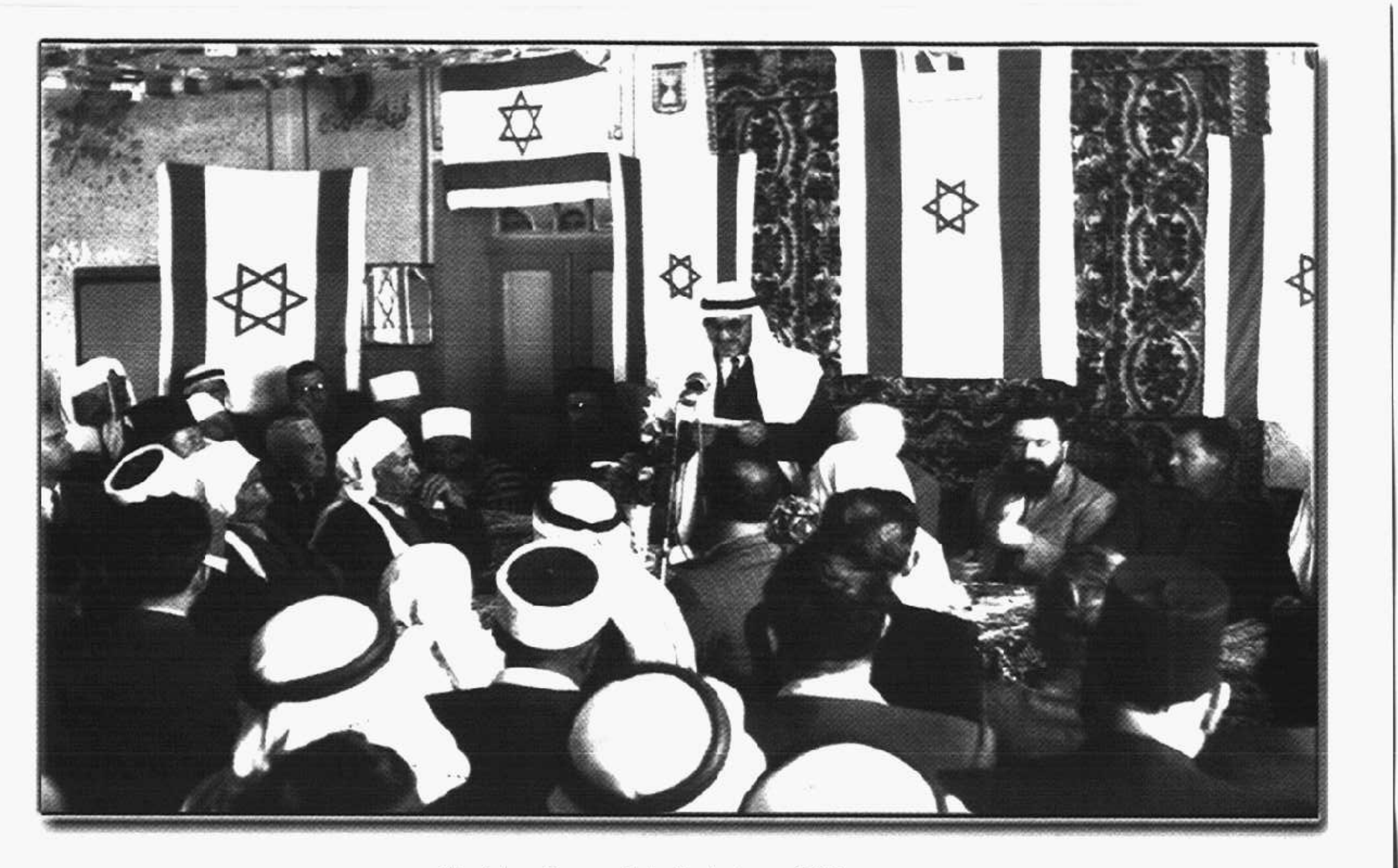


Mr. Ben Gurion, first Israel Prime minister in Julis in 1958



Mr. Ben Gurion meets a Druze soldier

Mr. Ben Gurion with Druze crowd



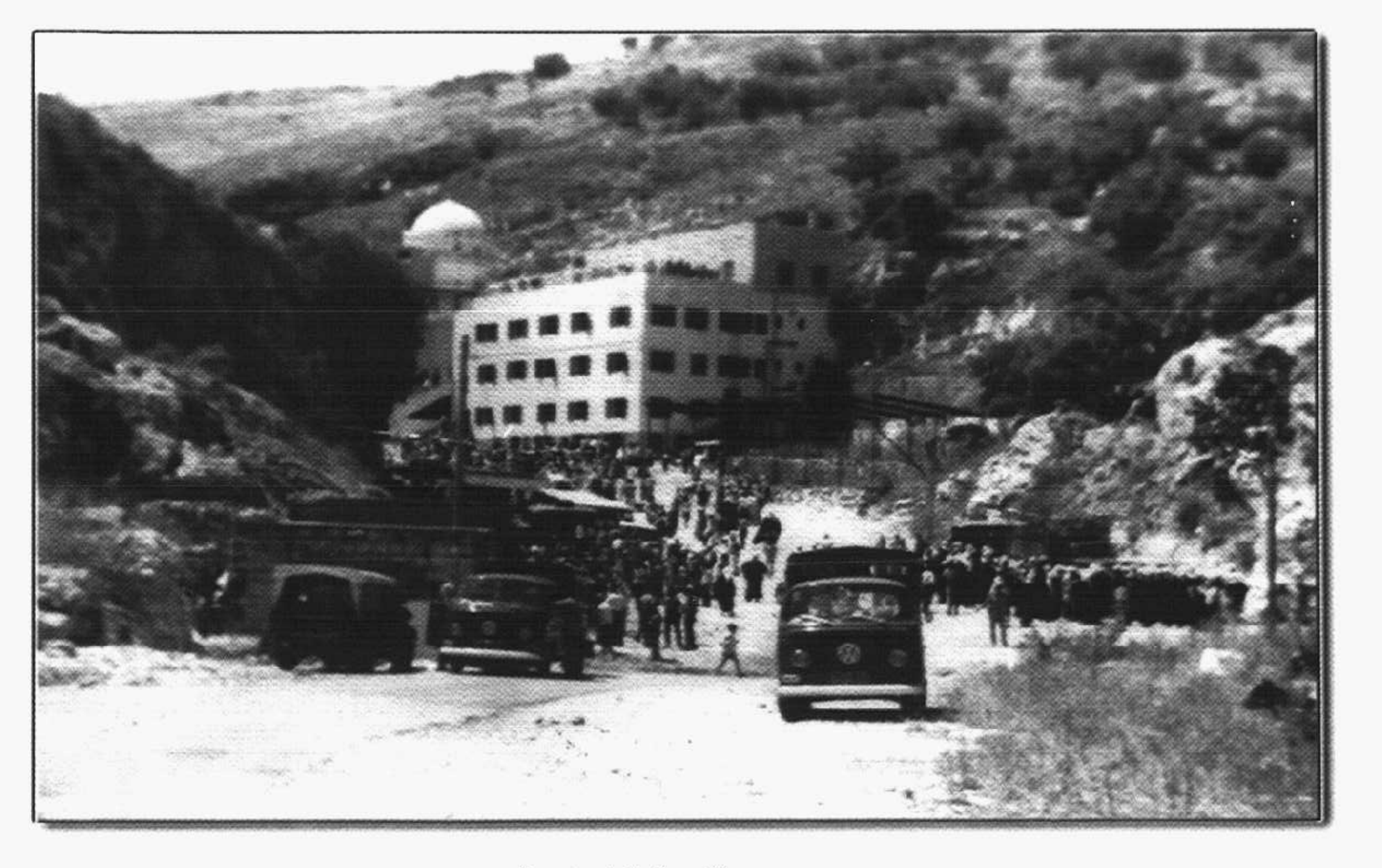
First local council in Pukaiaa - 1955



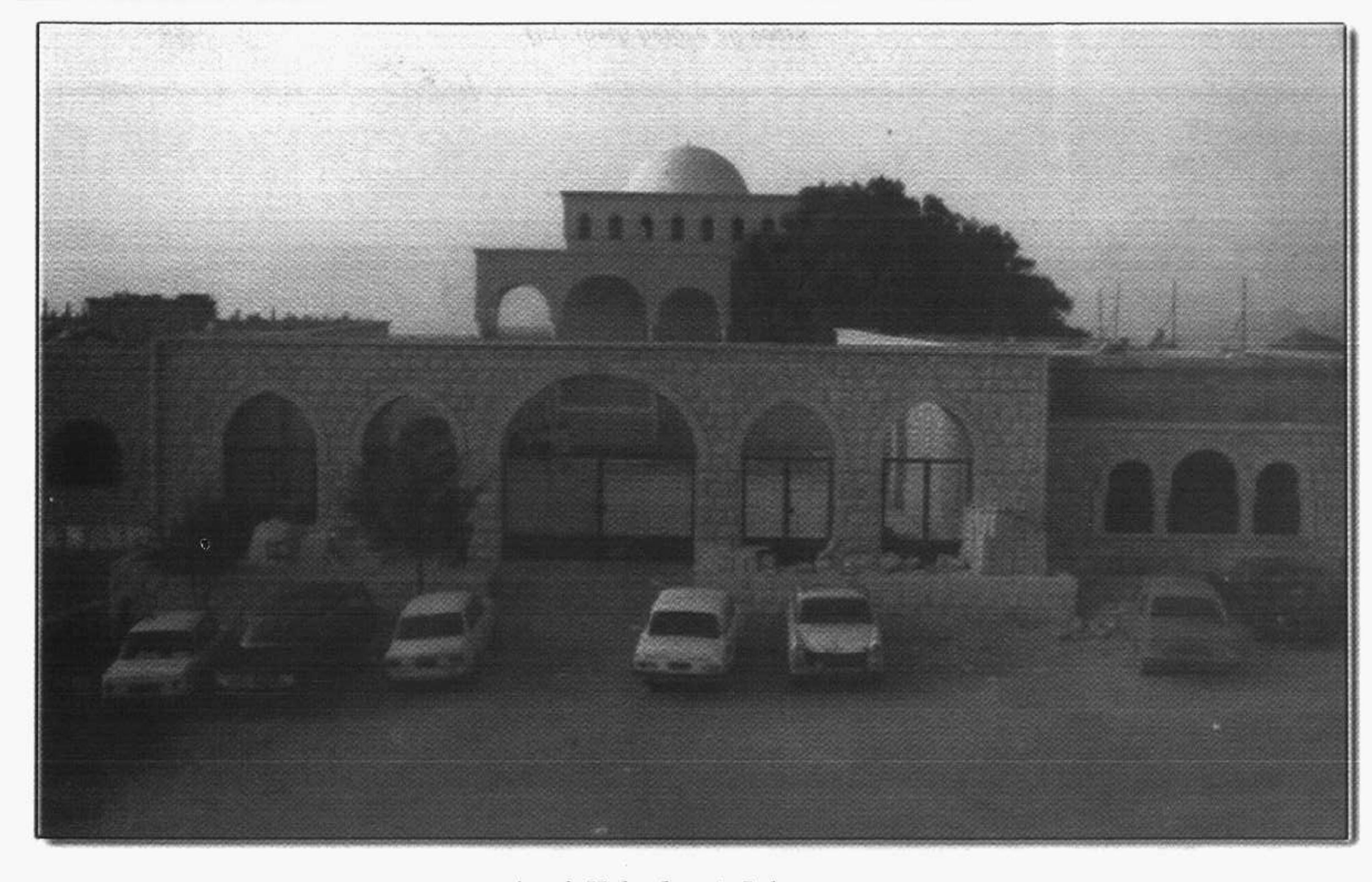
A Druze demonstration in Golan Heights



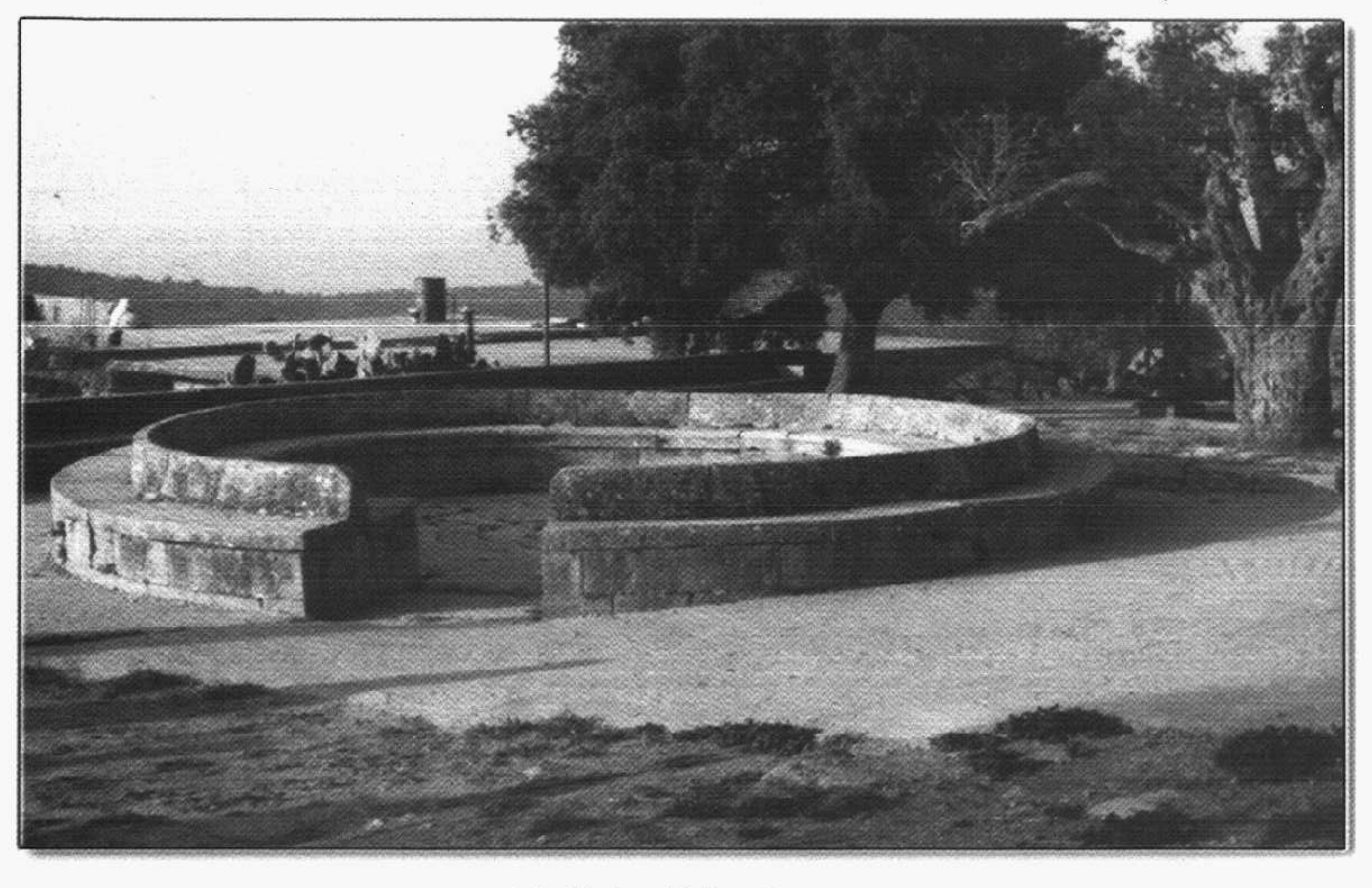
The grandson of Lawrence Oliphant in the old house in 2000



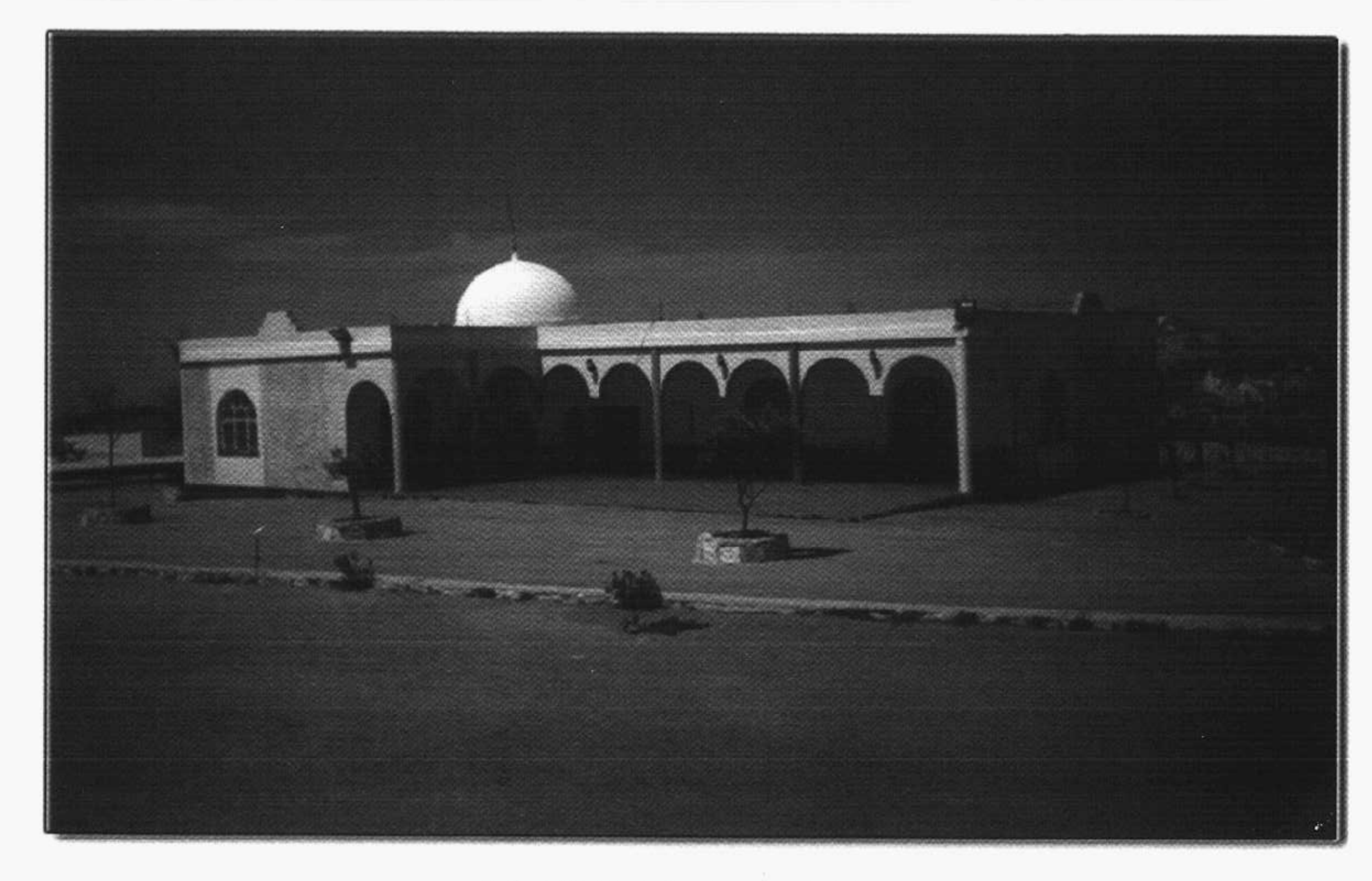
Itro tomb before 50 years



Ayoub Holy place in Lebanon



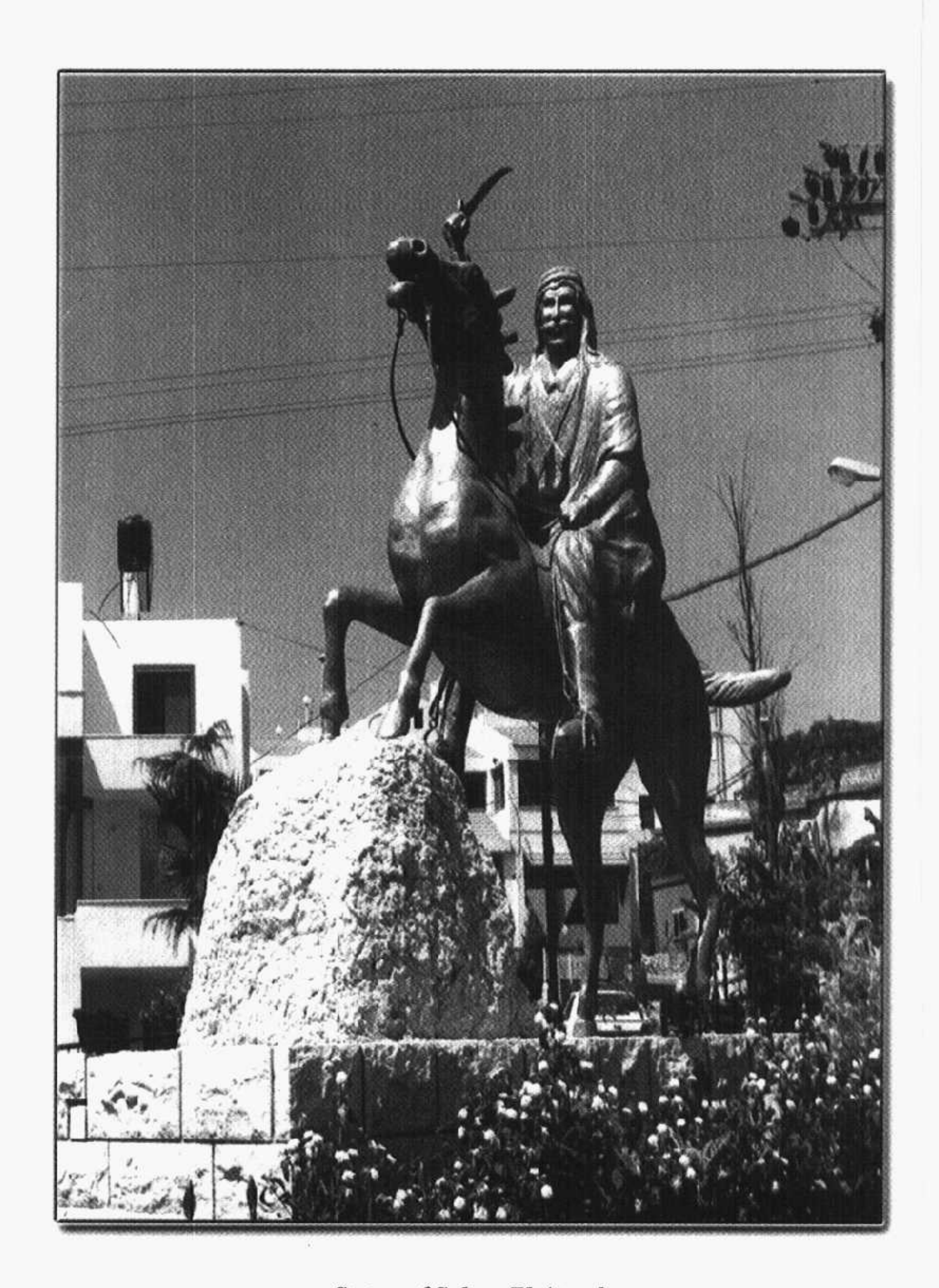
In Khalwat El Bayada



Bahaa El Din holy place in Beit Jan



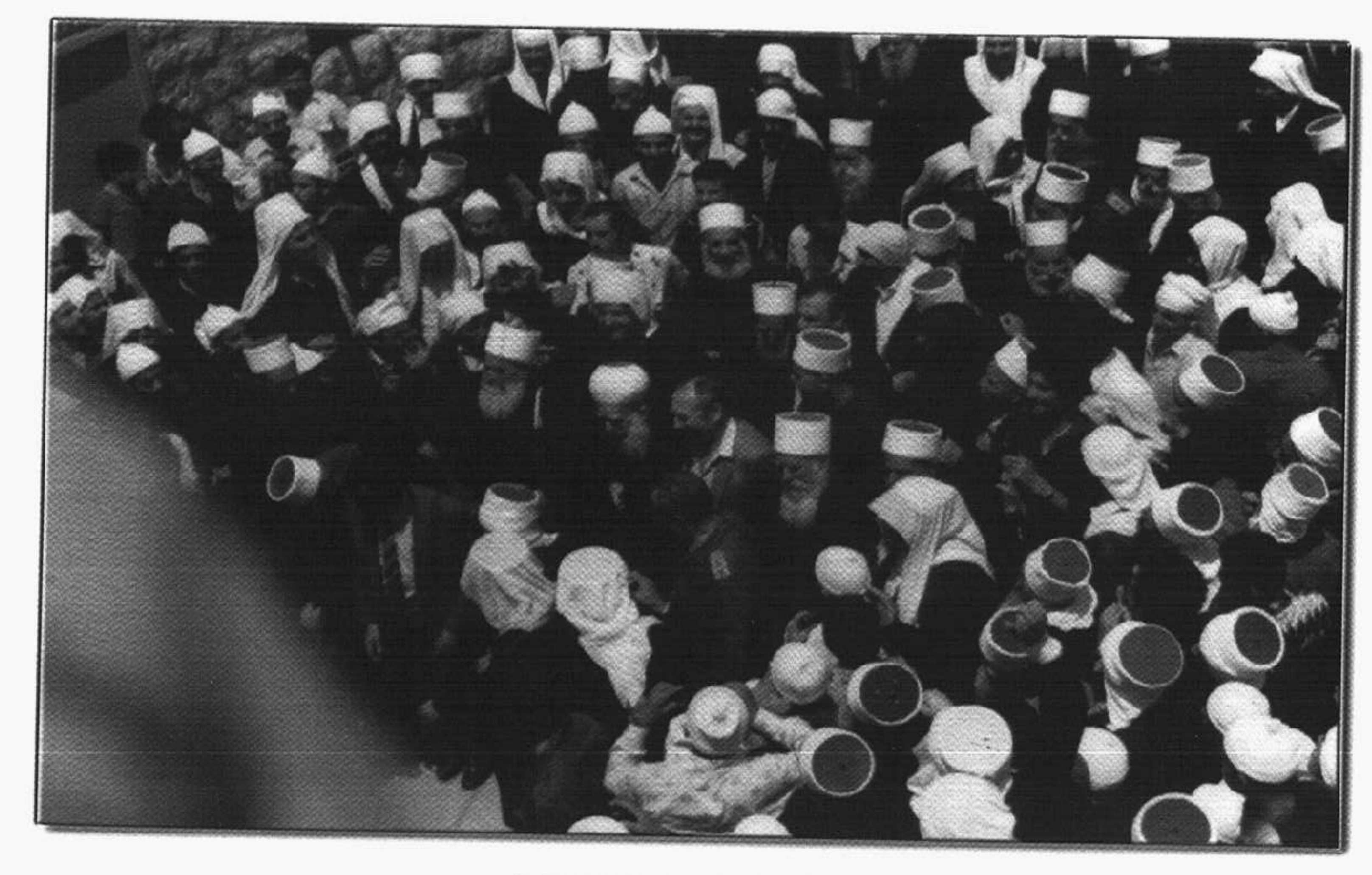
Sabalan holy place in Hurfaish



Statue of Sultan El Atrash



In the memory of Sultan El Atrash in Beit Jan in Israel



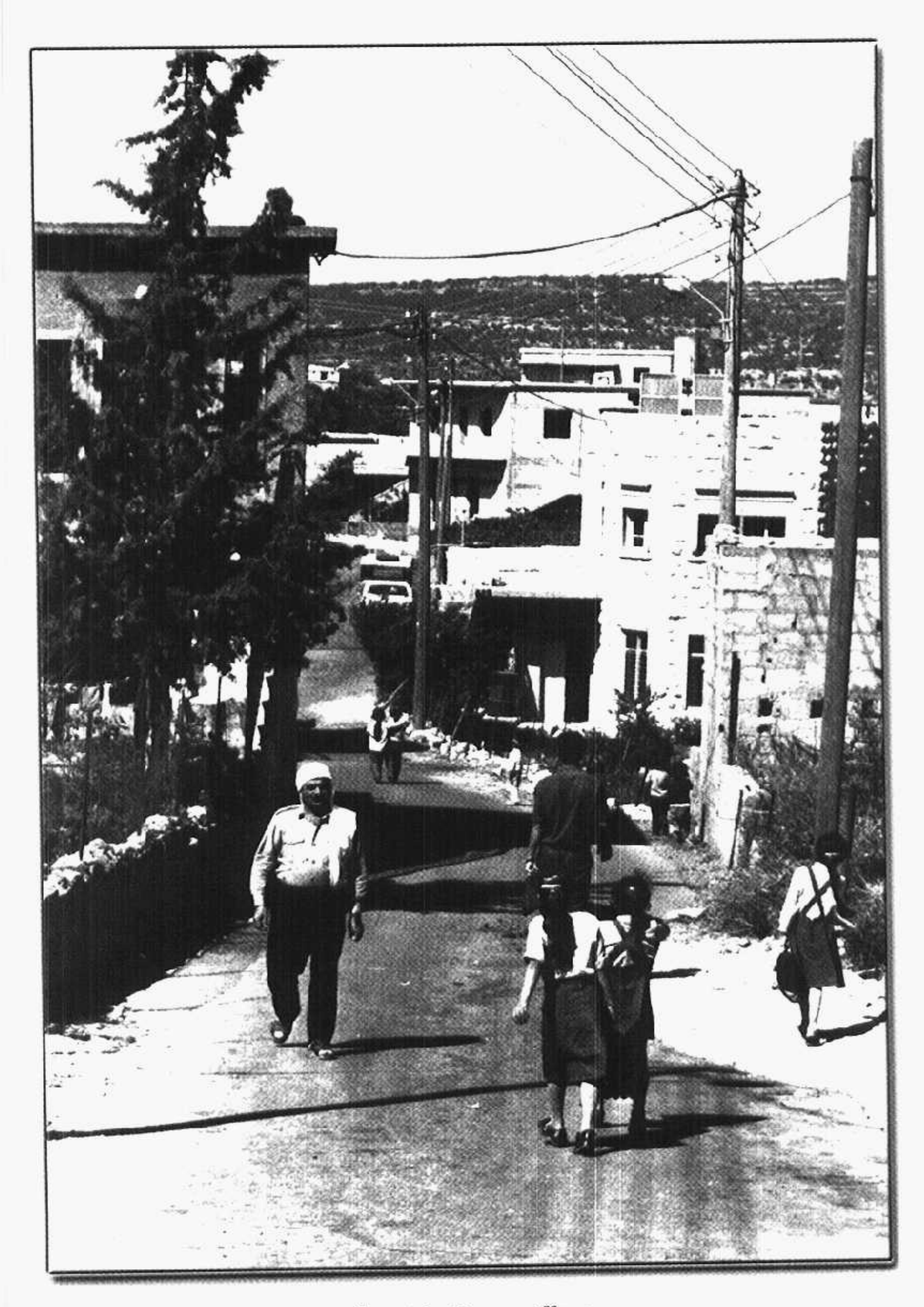
Religious leaders in Israel



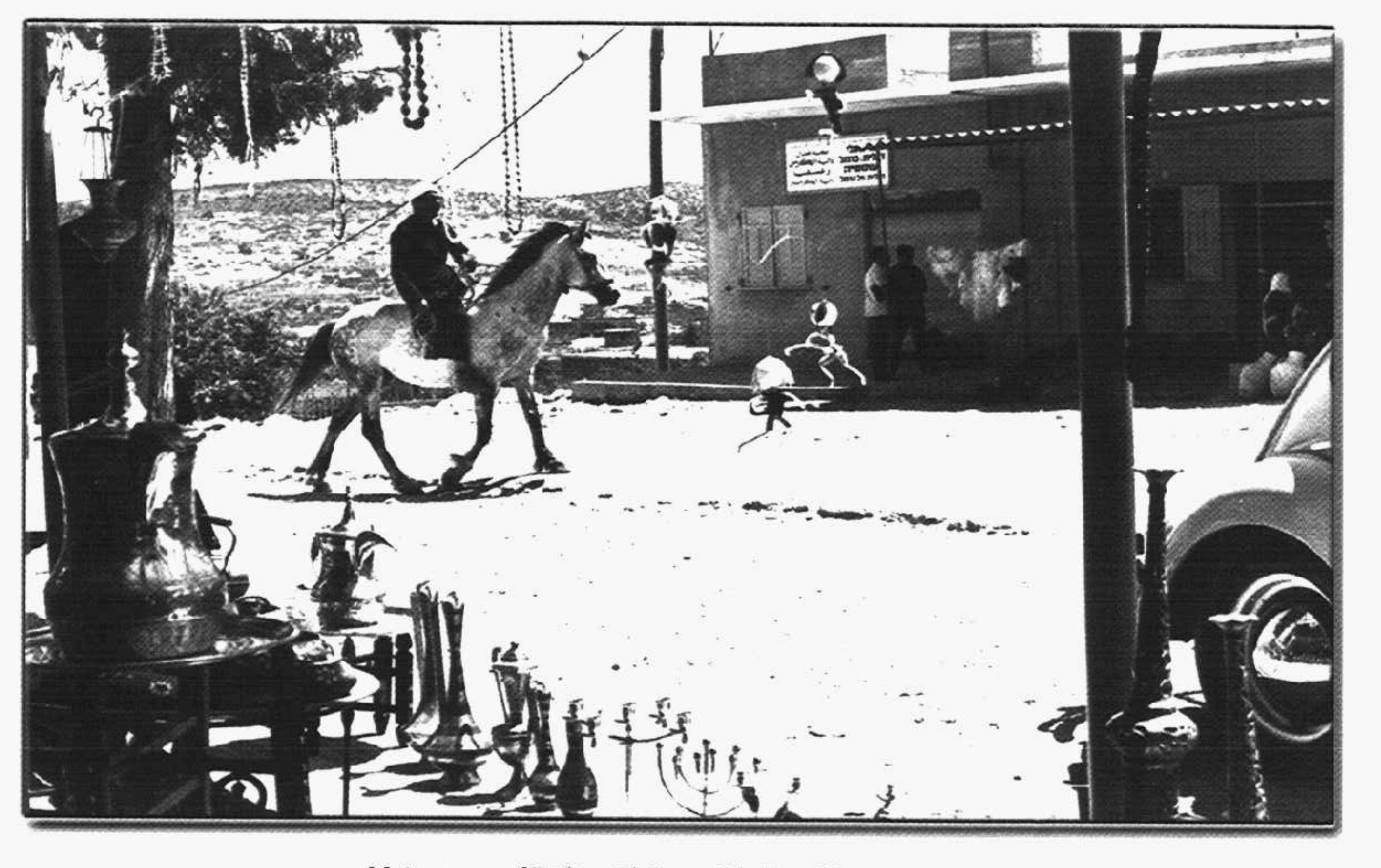
Druze sheikhs



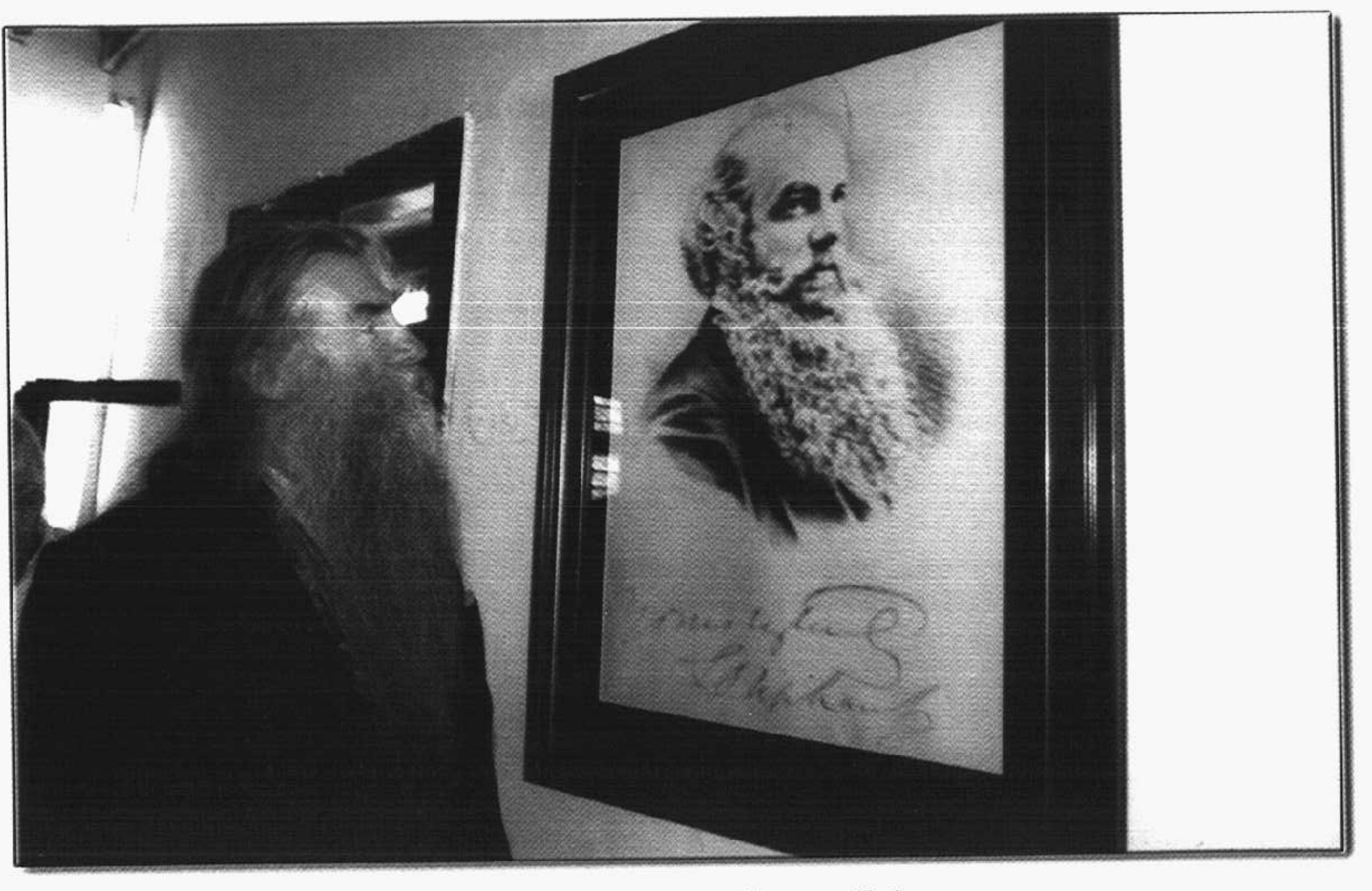
In the center of Dal'iat El Carmel



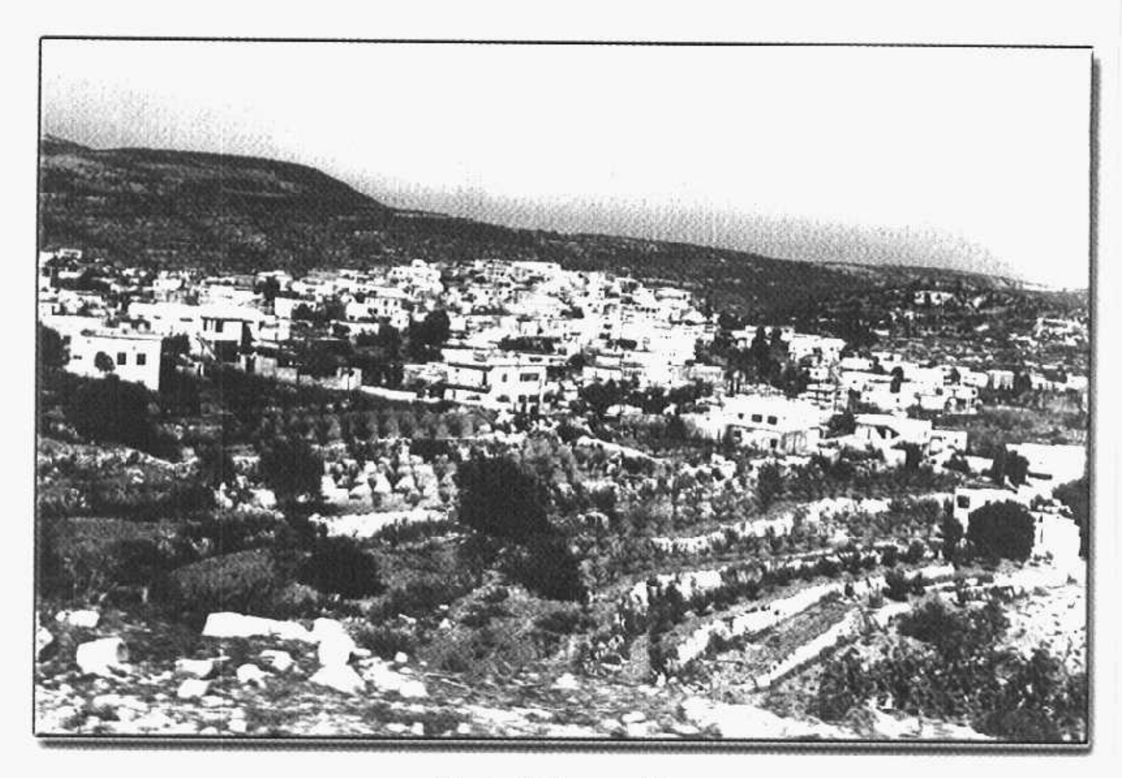
Street in Druze village



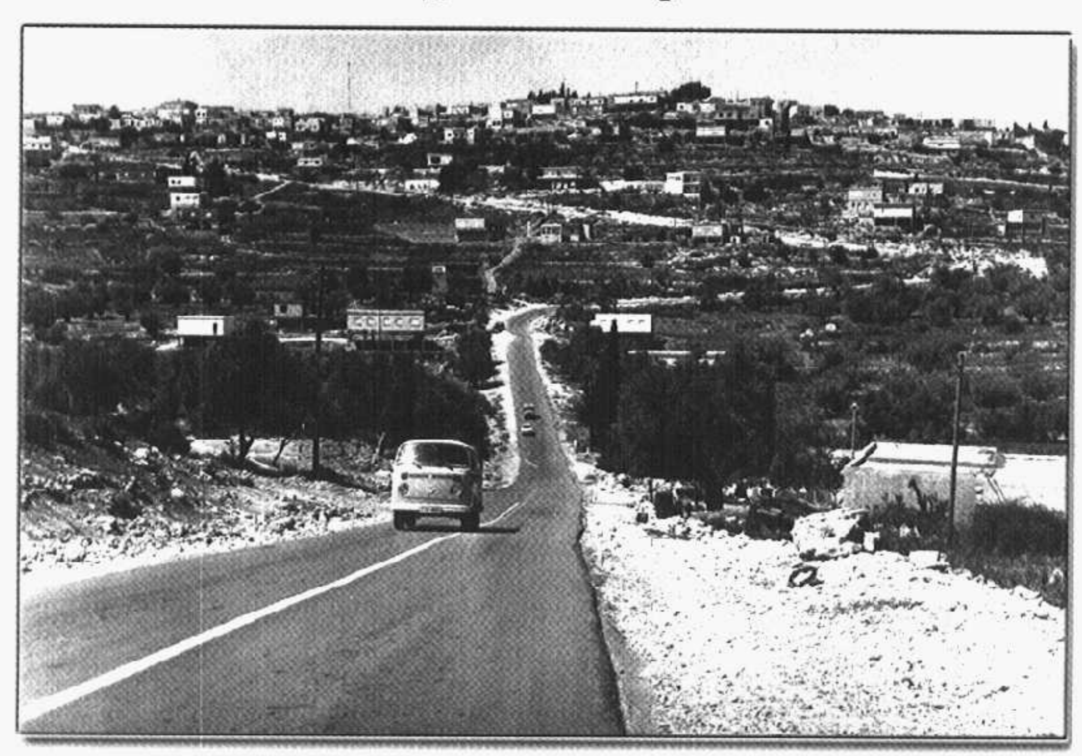
Main street of Daliat El Carmel before 50 years



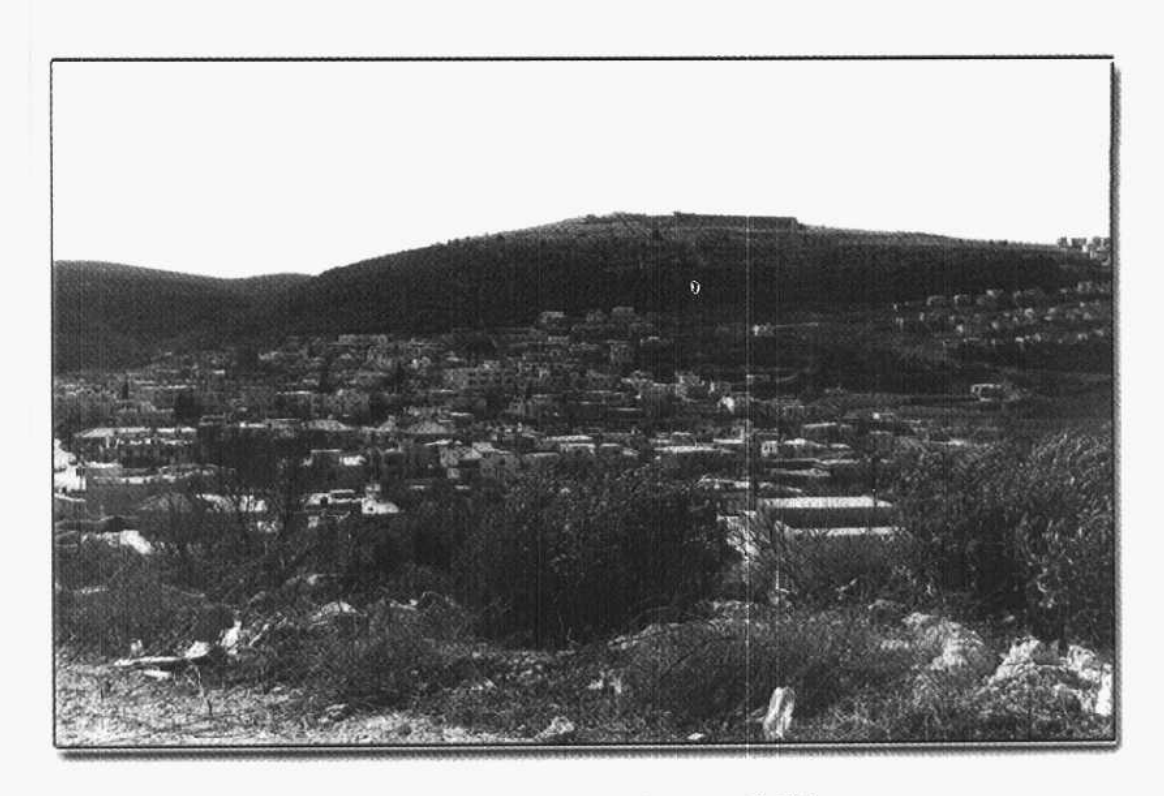
Oliphant in front of the picture of his grandfather



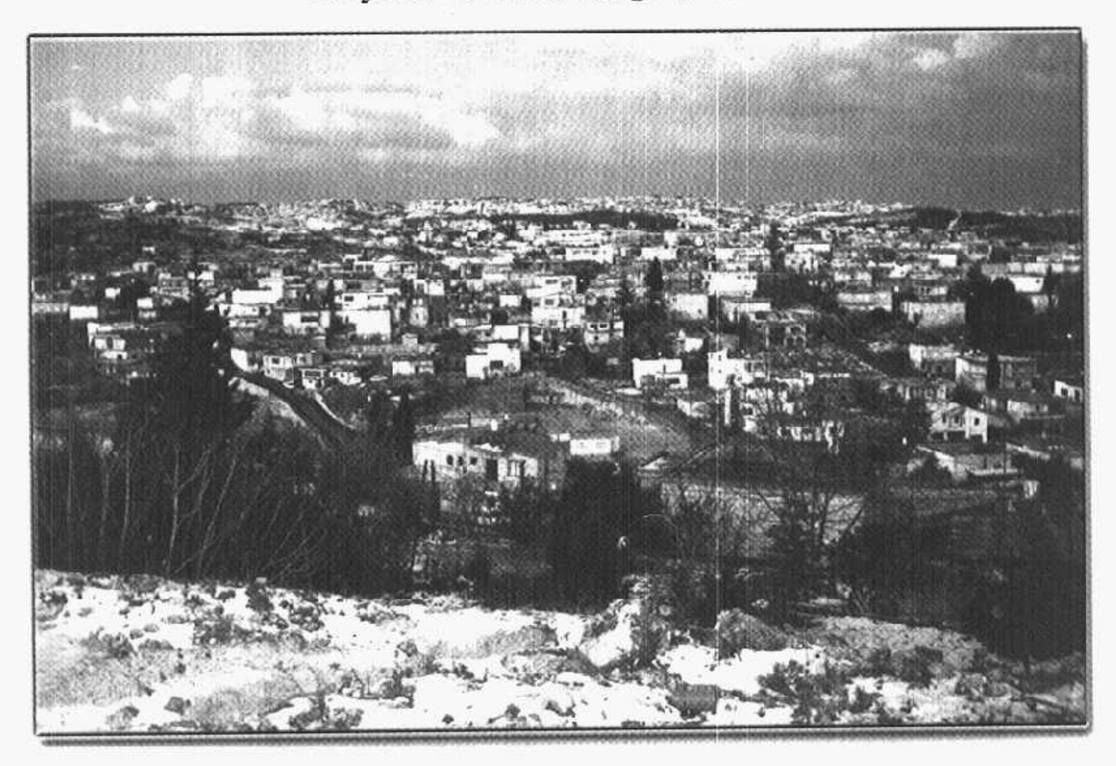
Typical Druze village



Entrance of Osafia before 50 year



Horfaish - a Druze village in Gallili



Dal:at El Carmel



A rural view in Druze village once



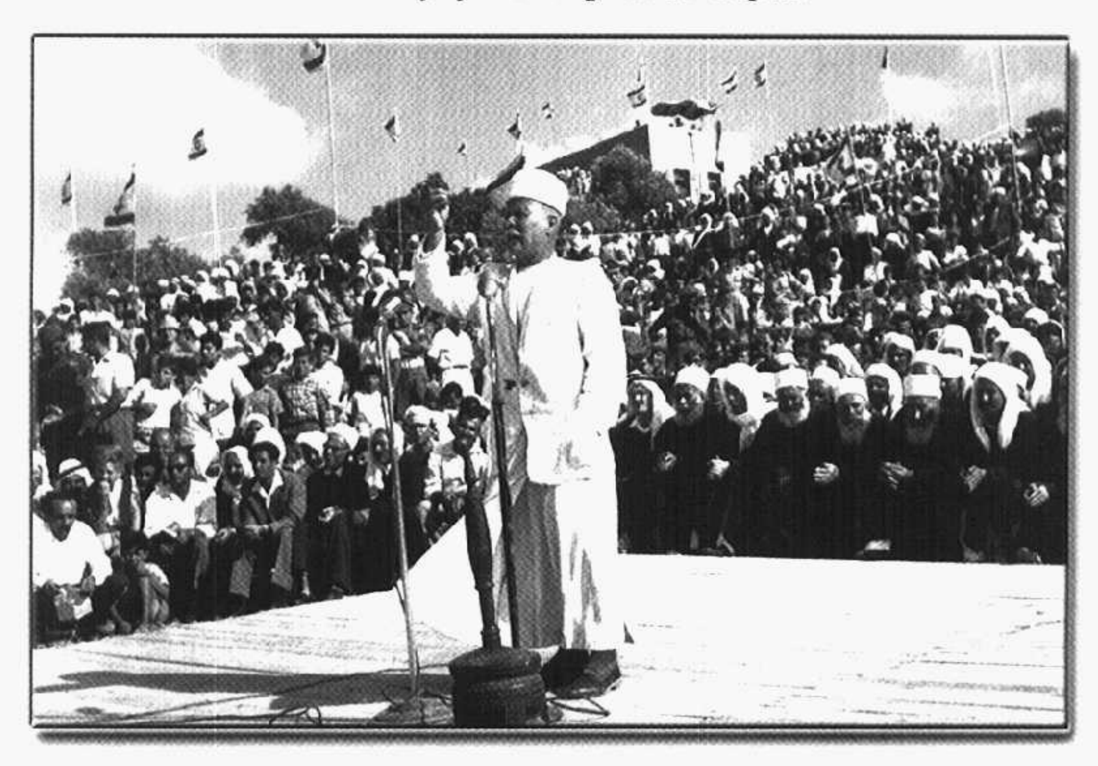
Sad songs in street telling about the death of important person



Druze pray in funeral



Ceremony of resolving murder dispute



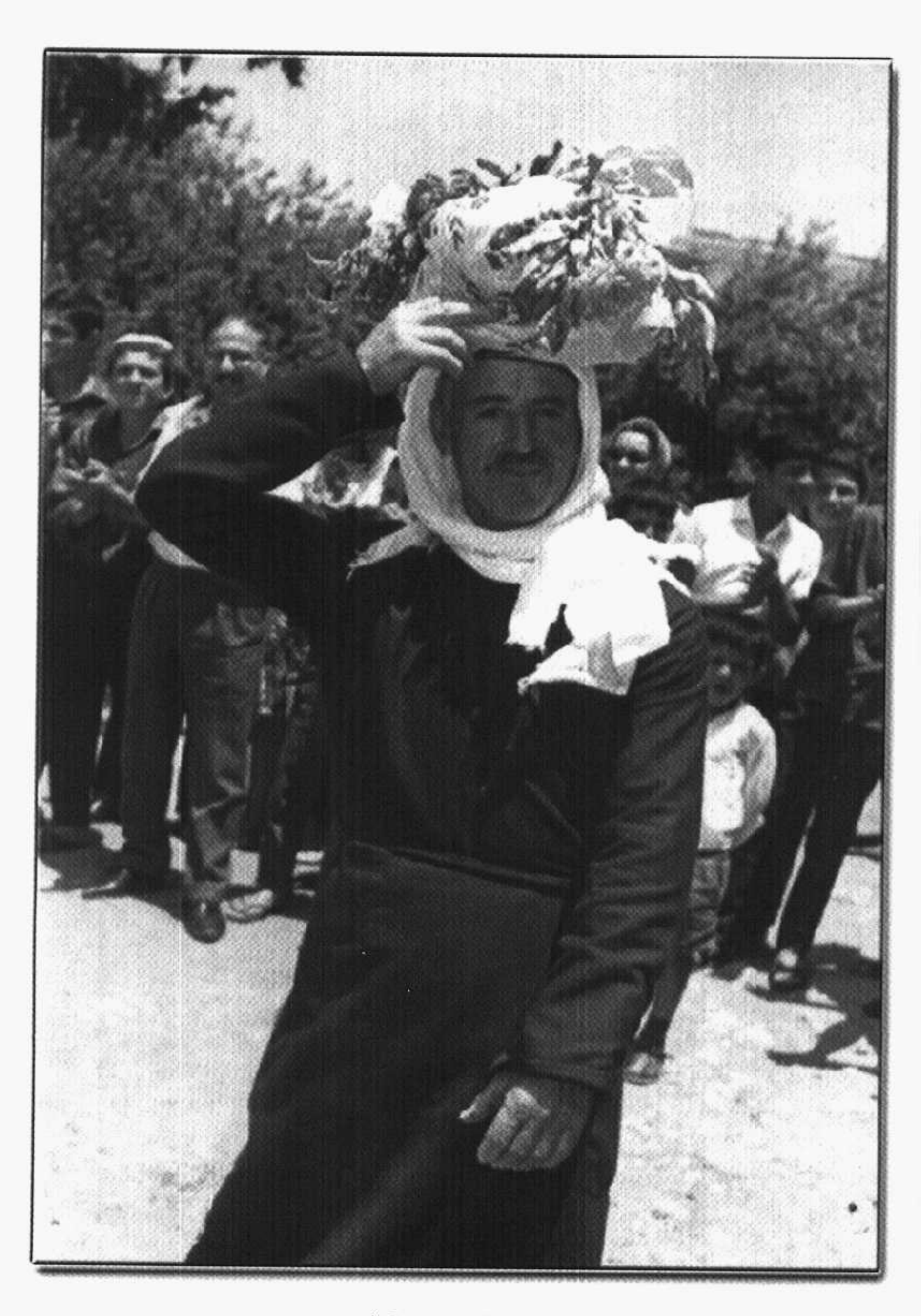
A Druze meeting



Druze dance group



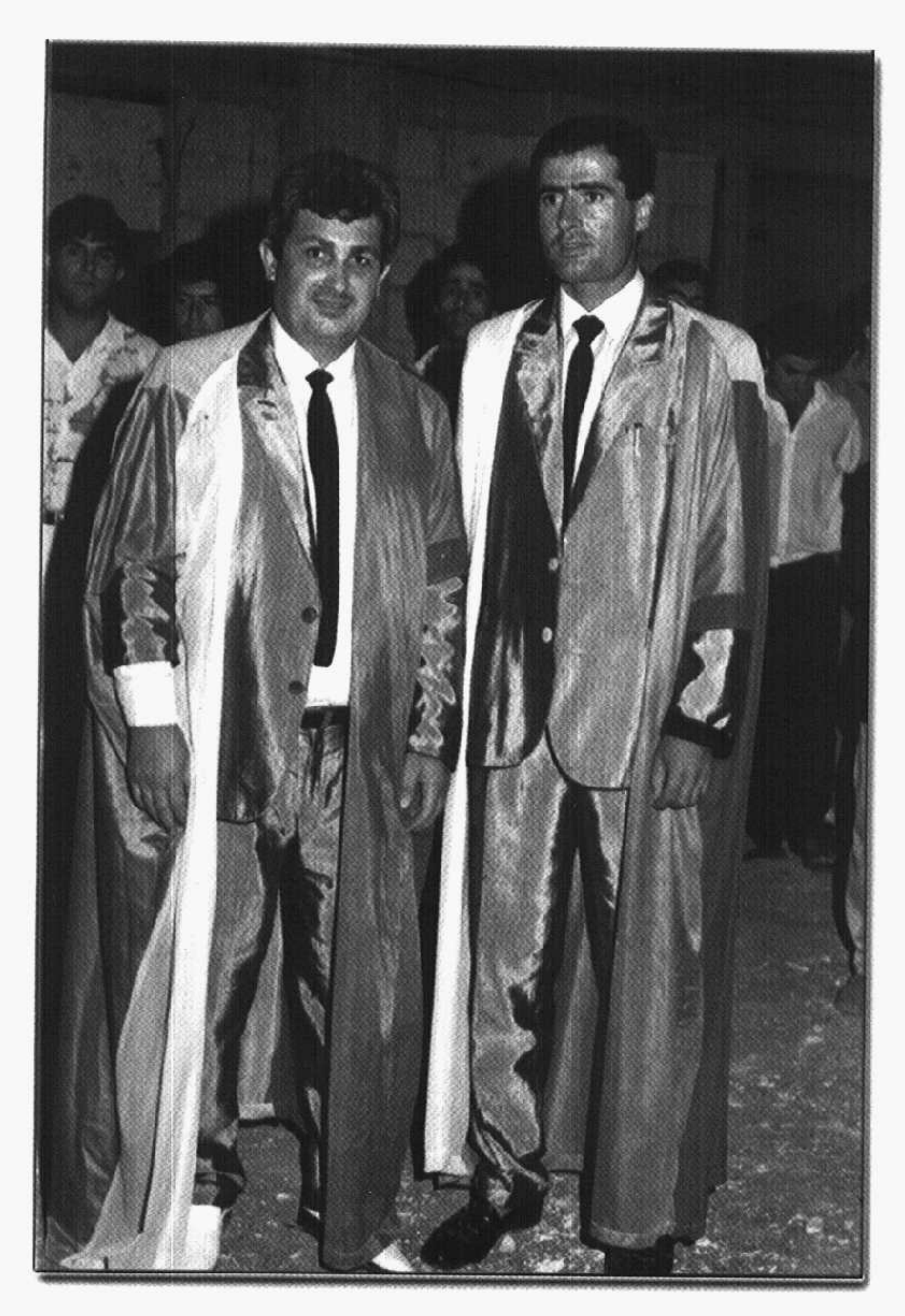
Druze traditional dance



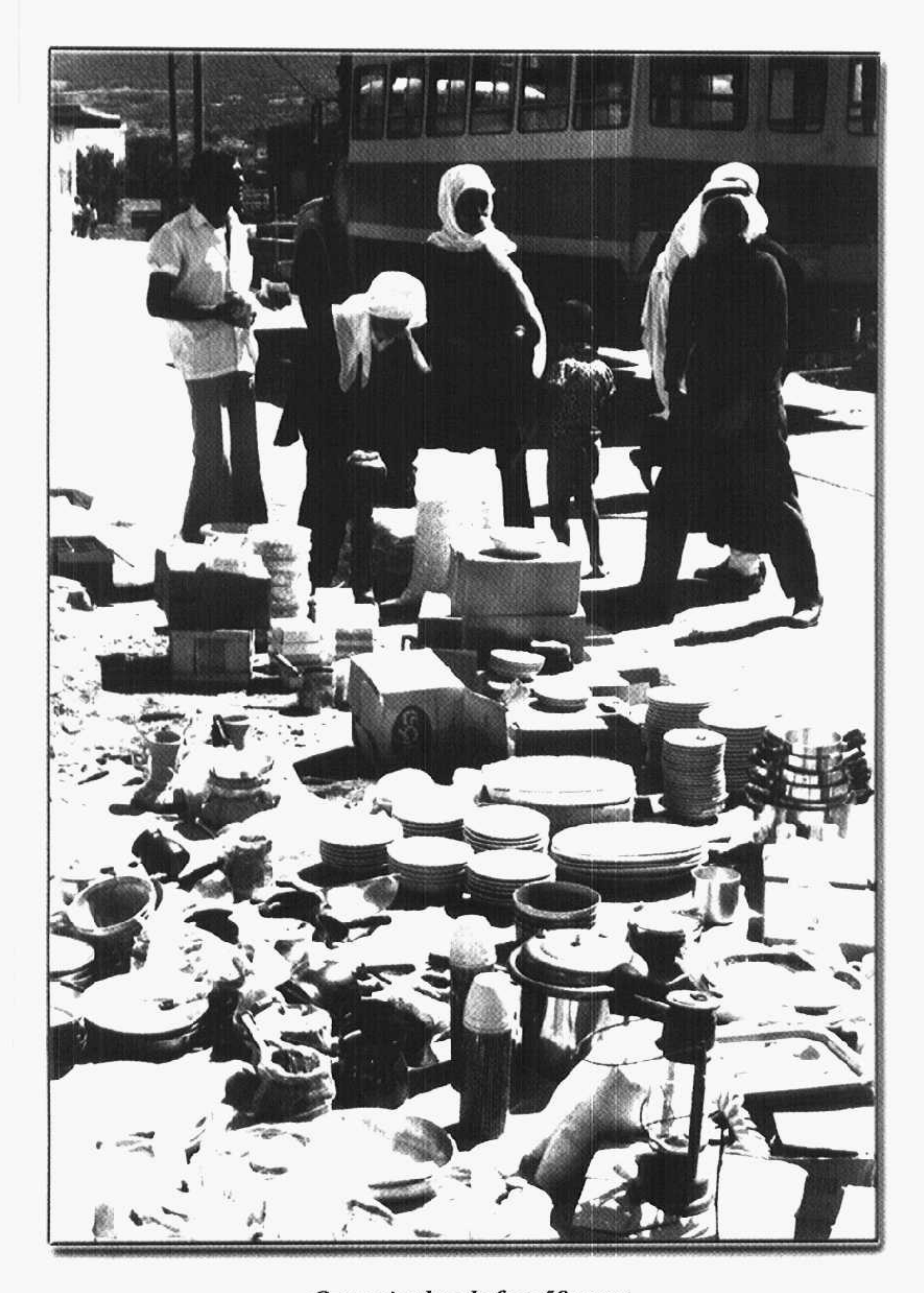
A Druze celebrates



Druze dance



Druze folksingers



Open air shop before 50 years



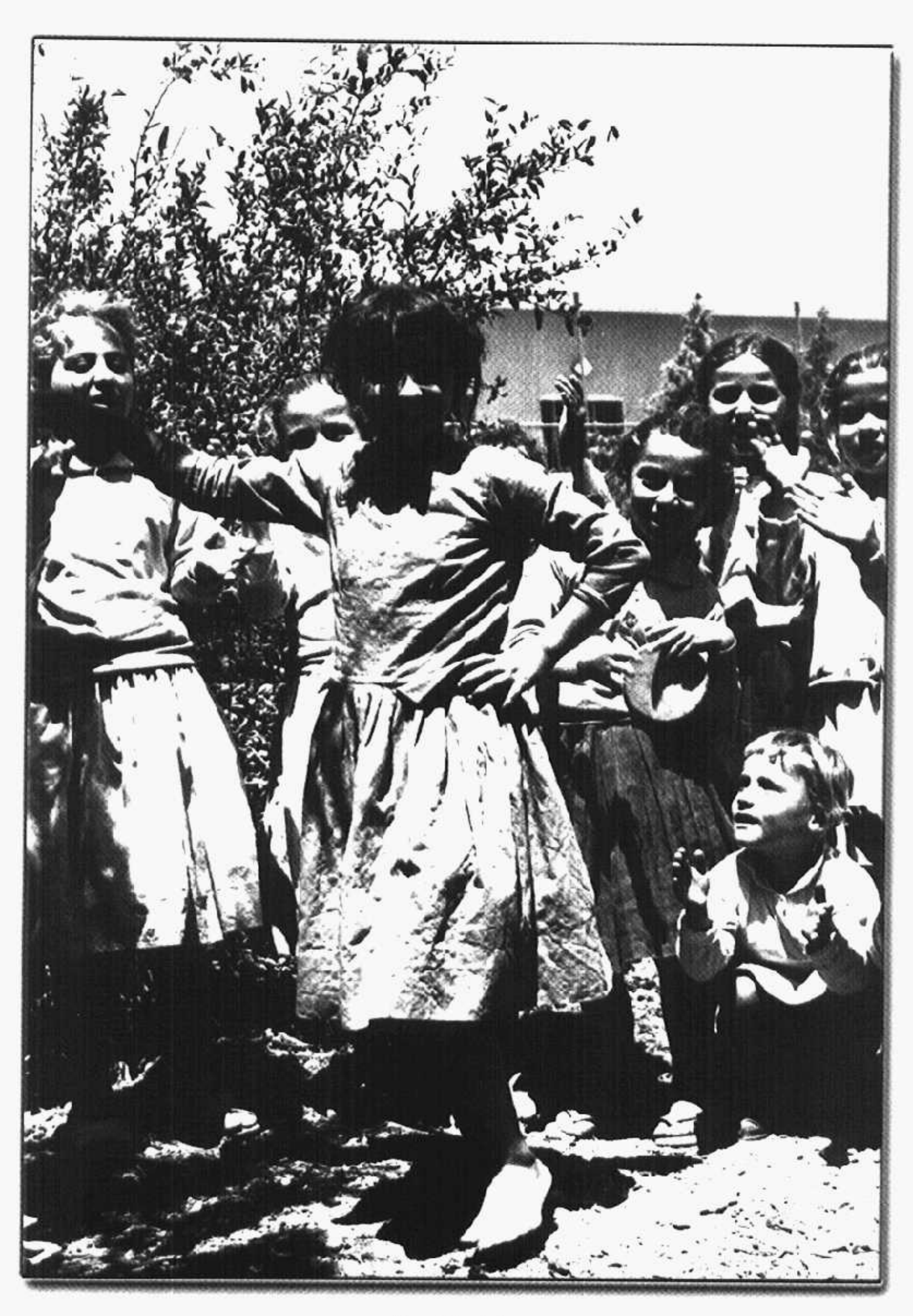
Selling apples in the Golan Heights



Mrs. Golda Meir, Israel prime minister with a Druze women



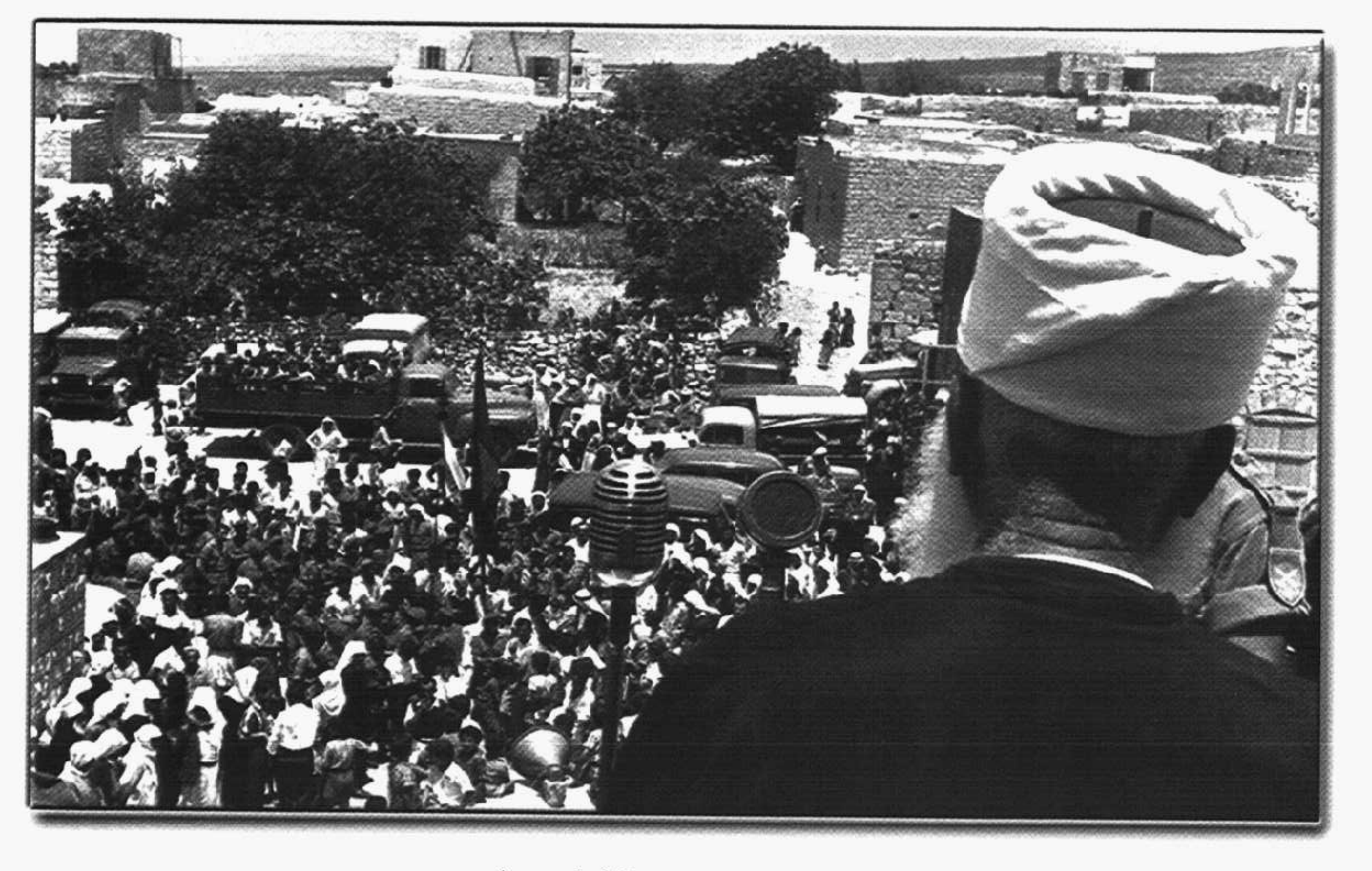
A Druze women preparing bread



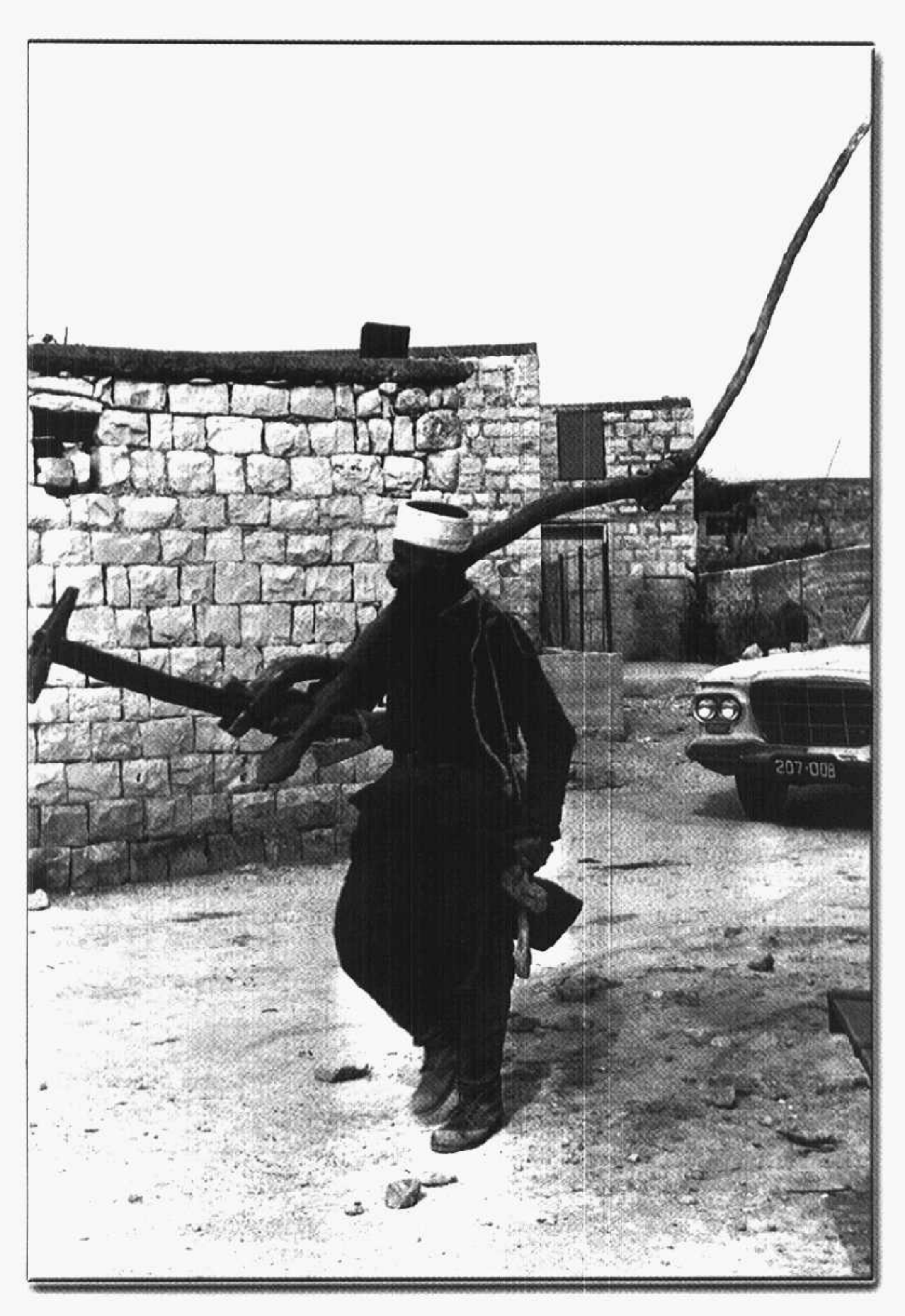
Small girls



Religious children



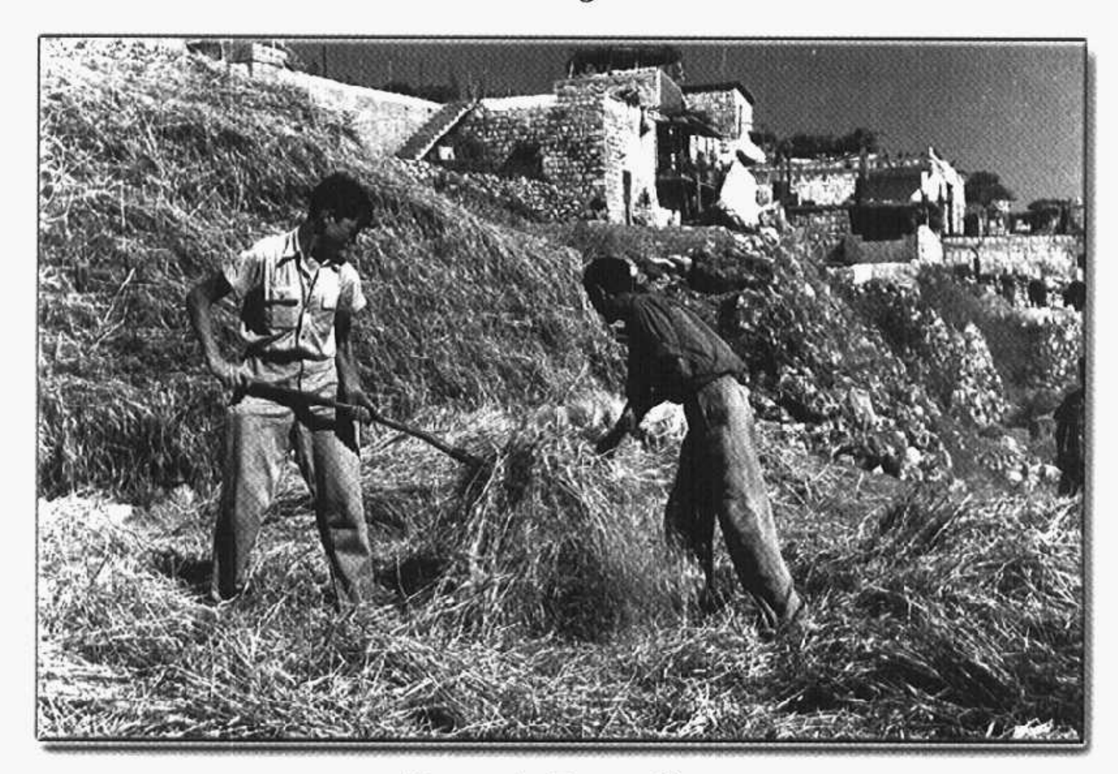
A crowded Druze meeting



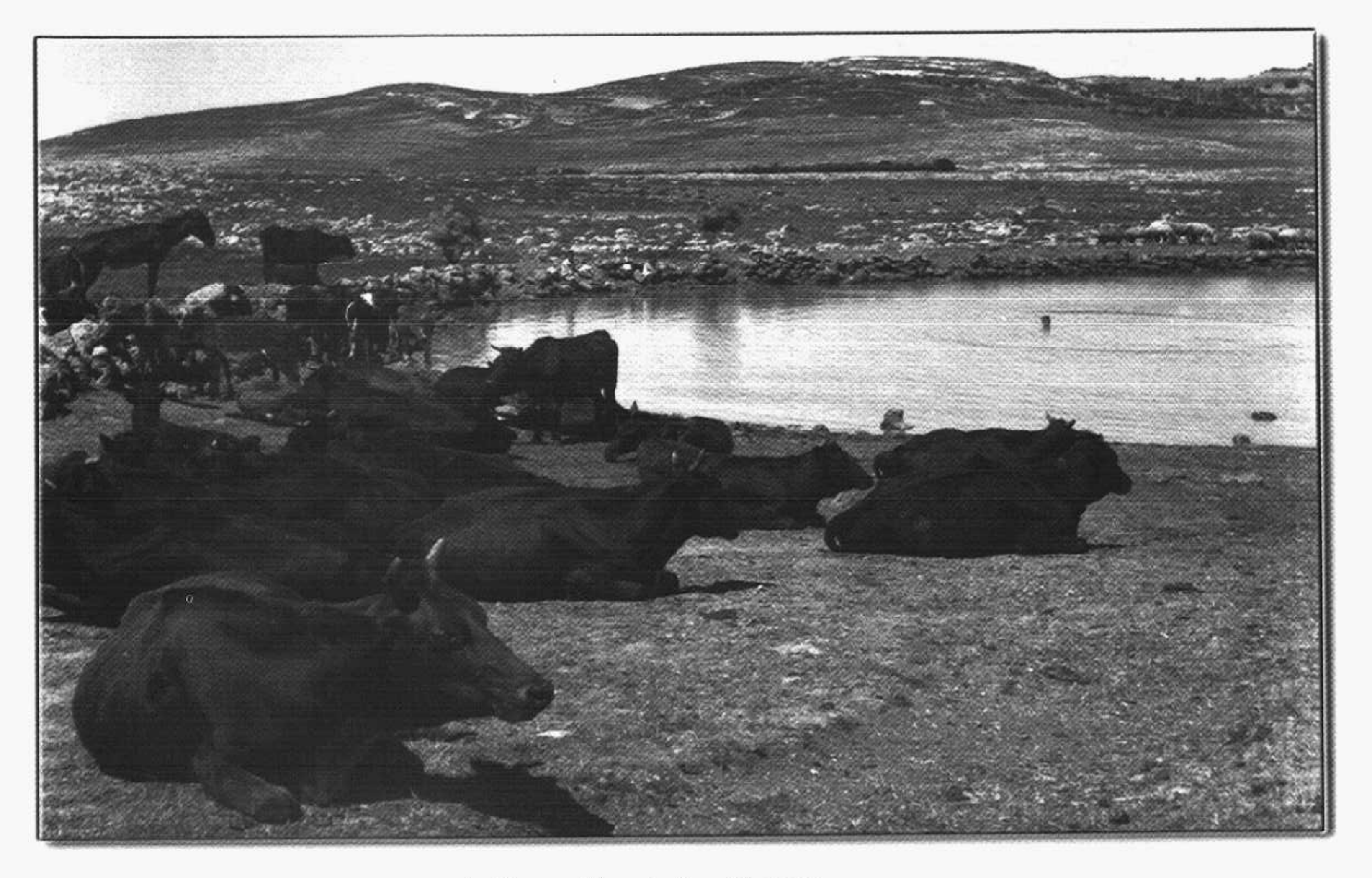
A Druze farmer



Old Druze agriculture



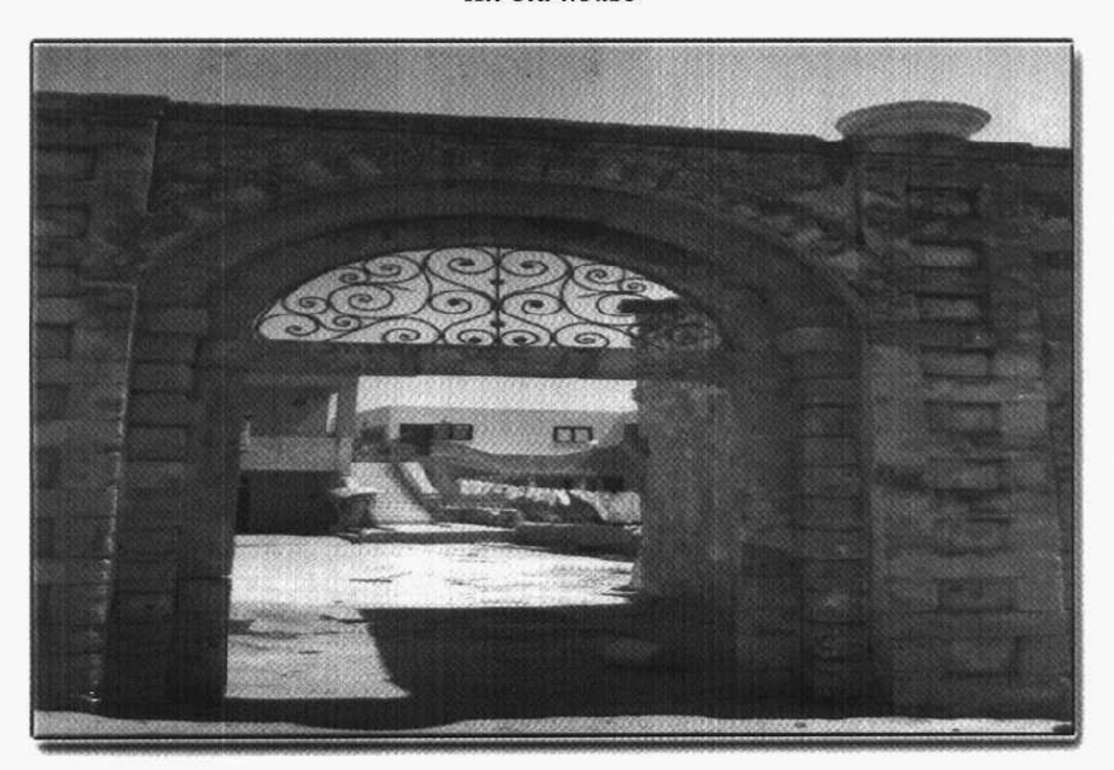
Harvest in Druze village



In Druze village before 50 years



An old house



A traditional gate

